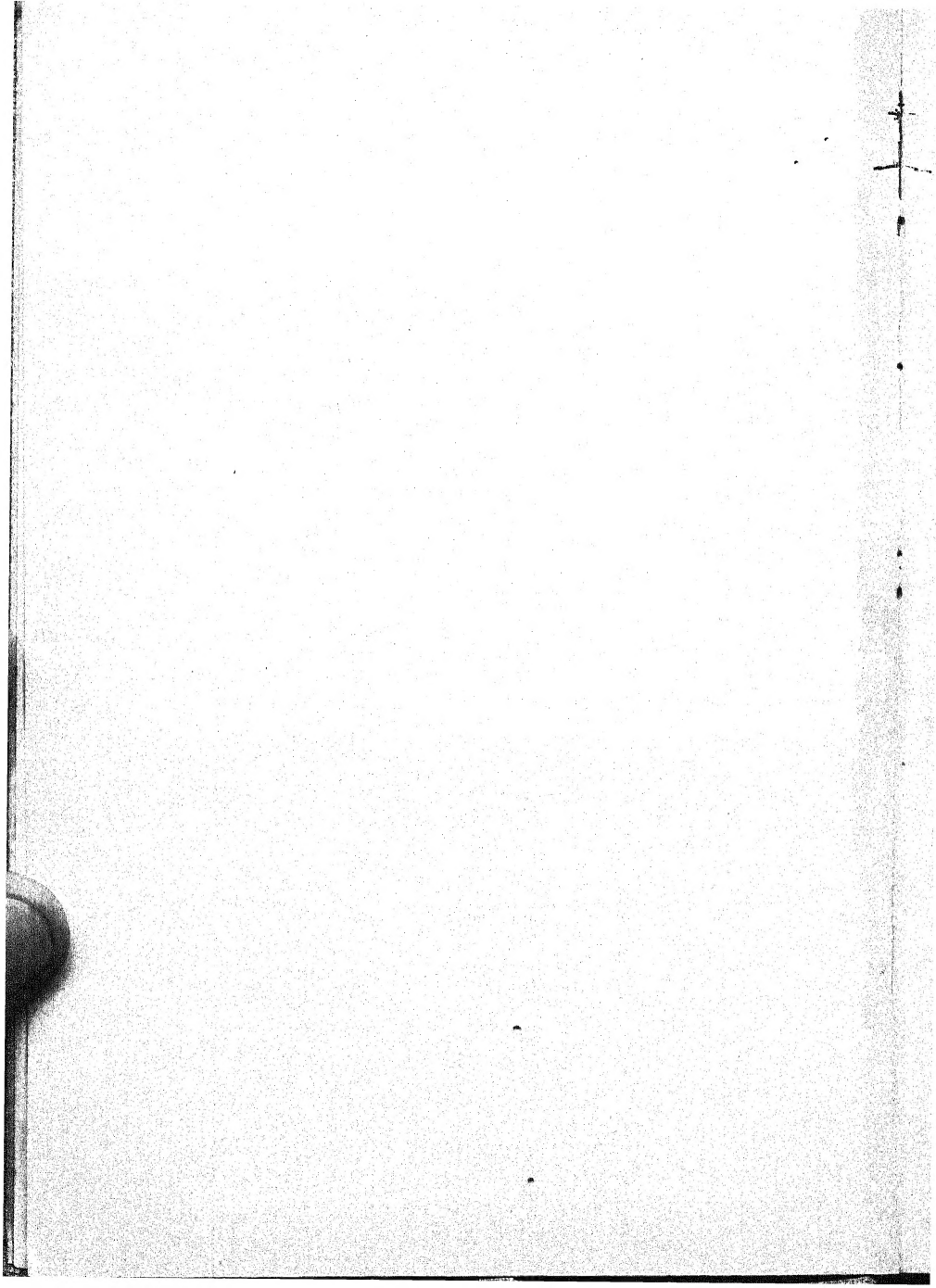


PRAYER AND YOU





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by

HELEN SMITH SHOEMAKER

WITH INTRODUCTION

by

E. STANLEY JONES



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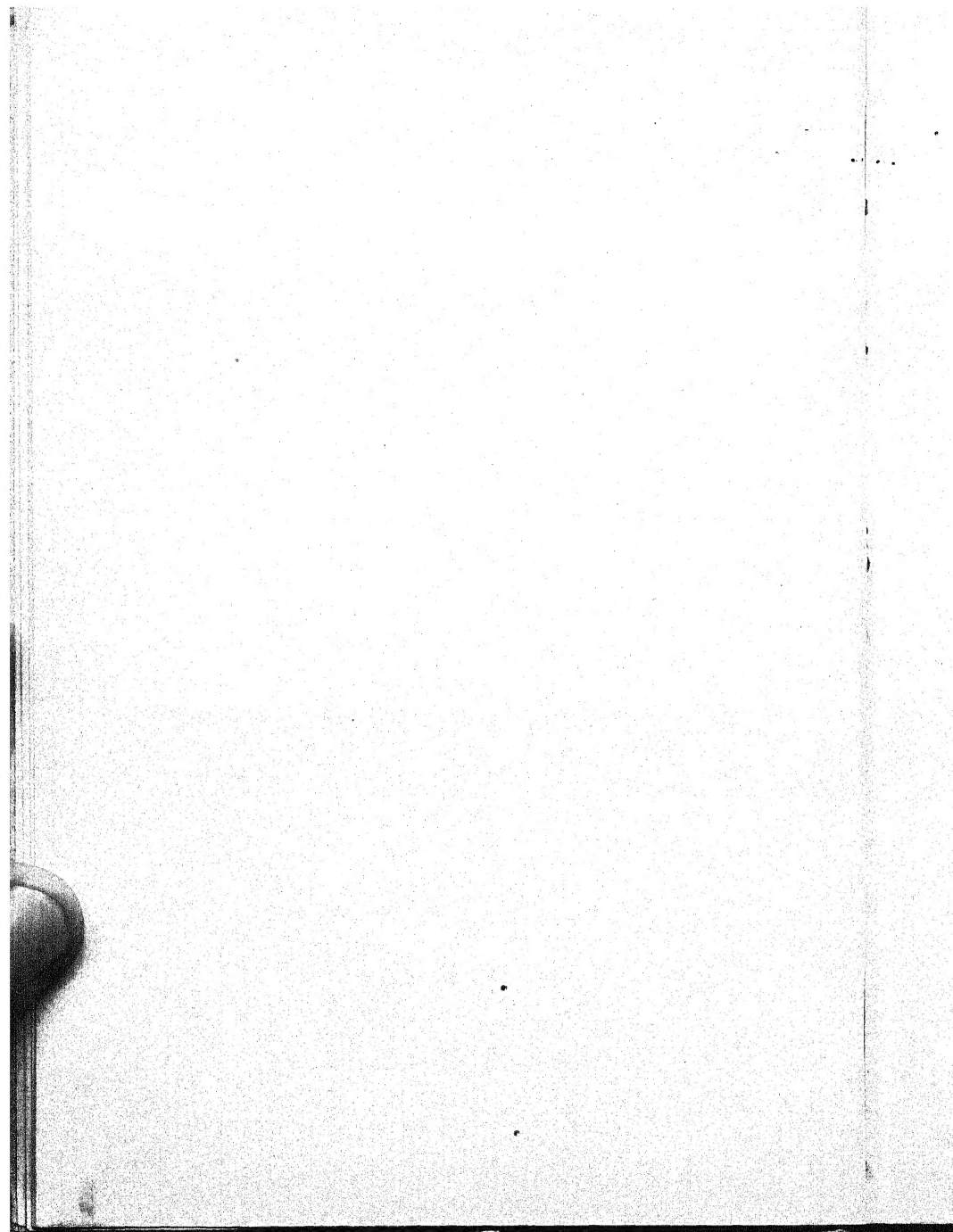
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*To my husband
and all those others
who are joined with us
in the ministry of prayer.*





INTRODUCTION

Anything that quickens the spirit of prayer within the human bosom is worth while—it is more, it is supremely worth while. For the supreme need of life is to feel that you are not alone, that you are working with some Reality at the heart of things, that a purpose is being worked out together.

Prayer brings that sense of togetherness with God—you and God work out life's purposes together. To learn to pray is to learn to live and to live abundantly.

Helen Shoemaker has helped in this little book to deepen the spirit of prayer within us. No one can read it without echoing the request of the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray." For Helen Shoemaker herself embodies the theme of the book—she embodies the prayer spirit. Hence her life has within it a plus.

This book will quicken those who come in contact with it—and quicken where it counts. For to pray or not to pray is to be or not to be.

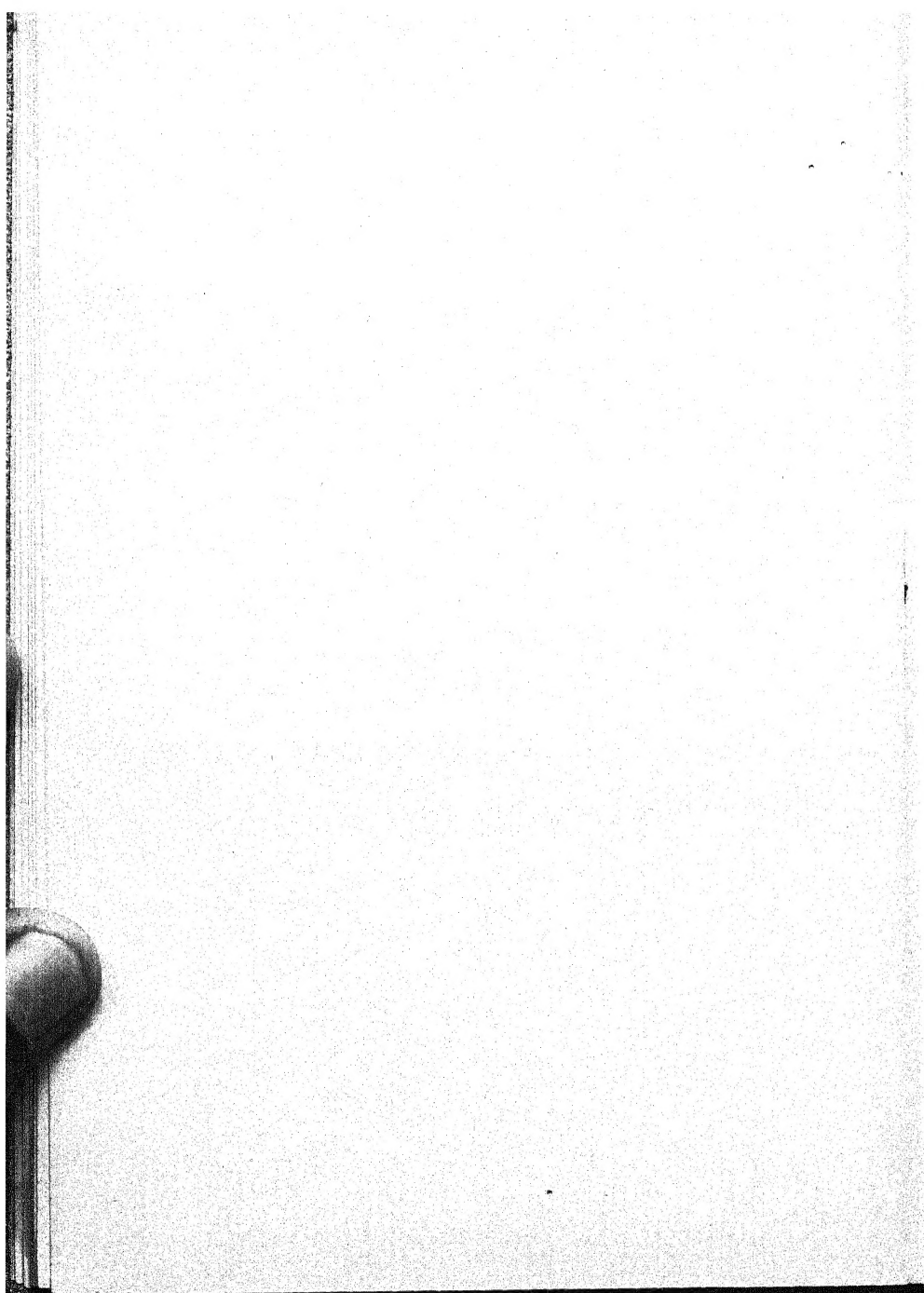
E. STANLEY JONES



CONTENTS

Introduction by E. Stanley Jones

I. Atomic Energy and Spiritual Energy	15
II. Don't Worry—Pray	19
III. Group Prayer	33
IV. Preparation for Prayer	69
V. Results	85
VI. God Answers Our Prayers for Our Friends	107
VII. God Answers Our Prayers for Our World	121
VIII. Prayer and the Good News	131
IX. The Key to Life	151



PRAYER AND YOU

I

ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPIRITUAL ENERGY

The discovery of atomic energy has revealed the astounding fact that the universe is made up of energy rather than of matter and that the energy lying all around us, not yet harnessed to human use, is infinitely greater than the energy that already has been harnessed.

The Science Editor of *The Herald Tribune*, a recent Pulitzer Prize winner and author of *Almighty Atom*, John O'Neill, has made the intriguing assertion that all energy springs from the Godhead. The story of creation is merely the story of the splitting of the original atom, and a continuous splitting has been going on ever since, until we find the universe in its present form. This is the story of material energy. There is an equally large amount of spiritual energy in the Godhead, and great prophets and seers down through the centuries have been experimenting with the release of this spiritual energy. The greatest spiritual scientist was Jesus Christ Himself. He had

such close contact with the Godhead, that he unlocked the doors of spiritual energy to an astounding degree. Sick people were made well, blind people made to see, hungry people fed, confused and desperate people given new hope, and even dead people brought back to life. Because we with our finite minds have not been able to explain these phenomena, we have called them *miracles*. But are they miracles—any more than the discovery of how to split the atom is a miracle? Are they not rather the natural result of learning how to tap this universal spiritual energy for man's welfare?

But what has all this to do with prayer? It has everything to do with prayer, because all the great spiritual teachers demonstrate that prayer ushers us into the presence of God, so that He Himself can share His riches of spiritual energy with us.

Most of us worry twice as much as we pray. We read twice as much as we pray, we talk twice as much as we pray. We run around all day long like frantic ants trying to keep life right side up, when what we really should do, is run around less and pray more. Millions of people would bear me out when I say that if we put into prayer for peace one-tenth the energy, the concentration, the self-sacrifice, the study that we put into waging war we might begin to see emerging the better world for which we all long.

I will try to show you in this book that, as Dr. E. Stanley Jones says, "to learn to pray is to learn to live abundantly."

The people of the world have just been through a common experience of trouble. Perhaps the only cement that will hold our one world together is this universal experience of suffering and our common apprehension about the future. The little people of nearly every nation, enemy and friend, have known fear, cold, sickness, hunger, have lost loved ones, been dispossessed, and the little people of every nation have been forced to their knees in prayer. Prayer may prove the handle by which all of us can contribute to a healing of the world's ills.

None of us little people want any more wars. For we and our children are the ones who stand to suffer the most from germ bombs and atom bombs and the other horrible surprises being prepared for a possible World War III. A study of the daily headlines does not reassure us. There seem to be great destructive revolutionary forces still sweeping across the earth. We thought we had disposed of totalitarianism when we conquered Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo, but, instead, we see the police slave state not only rearing its ugly head in Russia but closing its cruel, greedy, atheist fingers around most of Europe. Eighty million of the little people who pray live in the lands behind

the iron curtain. Will their prayers and heroic resistance born of prayer be able to conquer this new manifestation of evil, as their prayers and heroic resistance helped to conquer it in Holland, France, and Norway during the recent war? If John O'Neill is right, if the spiritual energy lying in the Godhead is exhaustless, surely we can unite and turn to Him for more help, more wisdom, more guidance, more courage in these terrifying days.

Dr. Frank Laubach in his illuminating book, *Prayer, The Mightiest Force in The World*, says: "We do not persuade God to try harder when we pray; it is our world leaders, our statesmen and churchmen whom we persuade to try harder. We help God when we pray. When great numbers of us pray for leaders, a mighty invisible spiritual force lifts its minds and eyes towards God. If they listened to our suggestions we would probably be more or less wrong. But what God tells them when they listen to Him must be right. It is infinitely better for world leaders to listen to God than for them to listen to us. Most of us can never enter the White House and offer advice to the President. Probably he will never have time to read our letters. But we can give him what is far more important than advice. We can give him a lift into the presence of God, make him hungry for

divine wisdom, which is the grandest thing one man ever does for another."

Do you realize what this means? It means that every one of us, no matter now humble or ineffective we consider ourselves, can, through our prayers, help to decide which way the world is going. If we do nothing else in our lives but pray, we will be making a vital and important contribution to the world's stability. Just think of the countless millions of us who can pray. You wives, mothers, and sweethearts of our war veterans—surely you will want to pray. You war veterans—many of you learned to pray out there. There is greater need for it than ever if all that you have won is to be held! You disabled folk and shut-ins—you are not on the shelf, your prayers can make you as important as the most eminent statesmen. You housewives, pray as you cook and sweep. You great army of workers, pray at work, pray going to and from work. You young people—you don't want your lives interrupted as were the lives of your older brothers and sisters—you must pray too. You old people, you who feel your life is over, or that life has passed you by—you are vitally important to this great army of prayers. That's the beauty of it—no one need feel frustrated, or inferior, or finished, because everyone who prays is a *builder* of the *future*. Therefore, let us lift our voices in prayer—all of

us little people—so that a great, united, swelling chorus may impel men everywhere to bind up the nations' wounds and get on with the great task of waging peace until it is won.

II

DON'T WORRY—PRAY

Learning How to Pray

A young captain of infantry lay on the operating table in a front-line emergency hospital at Okinawa. The doctor was looking at his badly wounded right arm with anxiety. "I may have to take it off," he said tersely. "I don't think so, Doc," replied the young captain calmly. "You go to work and I'll pray for you." The arm did not come off. Later, the best surgeons in the army hospital back home told the young man that he would probably never get back the full use of the wrist and fingers. He just smiled. Five months later he was moving his wrist a little, and had even recovered the partial use of his fingers. I asked him what he'd been doing, along with the prescribed treatment. "Praying," he said simply.

Recently a mother came to me very troubled about a daughter whose home was breaking up. The daughter thought she loved another man. Her husband was

selfish and boring, and she craved attention and appreciation. So she made up her mind that in spite of the cost of divorce to two young children, she was going through with it. The mother had talked very firmly to both the wife and the husband, but they were adamant and the daughter had become very antagonistic to her. This state of affairs had so affected the mother that she was virtually ill with despair. I suggested that we pray about the situation, that she, the mother, stop trying to straighten it all out in her own strength, and put the daughter, the husband and the other man, all into God's hands. We prayed that each would have his eyes opened and see what God wanted them to see about themselves and about each other. Then we prayed that God would show them what to do, and give them the courage to do it.

The mother began to relax and realize that God was as interested in the situation as she was. She stopped lying awake at night. She stopped grieving about the daughter's coolness to her. Then things began to happen. The daughter's attitude cooled toward the other man. The daughter's husband came to the mother to ask her what was the matter with him that he had made such a mess of his marriage.

Finally, the daughter came to her mother. She realized she had nearly made a fatal mistake, and she came humbly for advice and help. Six weeks after the

mother and I had started to pray, the attitudes of both husband and wife were completely changed, and their home was re-established on an entirely new basis.

Recently the mother wrote as follows: "You will be glad to know that the experience has done a great deal for them both. It cleared all misunderstandings and their life is on a firm basis. B. has joined the church and H. has sent for her letter. Both attend regularly. They have bought a home and the future looks bright."

Don't worry—Pray! At some time in our lives we will all face trouble, illness, death, fear, as the young captain and the unhappy mother faced them. There are few of us at these times so proud or unbelieving that we do not resort to prayer, because we feel a great need to be reassured, to know that there is someone on our side, someone to give us comfort, endurance, courage—the power to see it through. Perhaps we are unable to visualize clearly the God to whom we turn in our extremity, but, with few exceptions, we do turn to Him, many of us in despair, some of us in hope, a few of us in expectation.

In the following pages are some suggestions as to how to make our prayers most effective and most rewarding. We are all so much like mountain climbers—eager to scale the heights, eager to conquer the peak. But those who will get there fastest and in the best con-

dition are those who studied their mountain first, learned the surest route, and procured the best guides to take them to the top.

There are many great guides to prayer in the New Testament. One of the most helpful is the passage in Philippians 4, where St. Paul tells us:

“Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

“Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Some of the necessities for effective prayer are contained in this passage—thanksgiving, meditation, petition, intercession, and listening.

We shall realize how much we need to develop each of these attitudes for a full prayer-life, just as we need to eat certain foods for a balanced diet. A full prayer life develops a healthy, energetic soul, just as a well balanced diet develops a healthy, energetic body.

St. Paul begins his wonderful passage with thanksgiving. “Rejoice in the Lord. . . . The Lord is at

hand.” What a promise and how well it applies to our own troubled times.

Perhaps this passage, “The Lord is at hand,” refers to the second coming of our Lord, which was imminently expected by St. Paul and all the other early Christian leaders. But there is a more intimate meaning, one that tallies with Jesus’ own word, “Lo, I am with you always.”

We can take His word for it—God is watching over us like a father. He knows our every need. He cares for us, He has a plan running through the universe like a silver thread. St. Paul knew that there was nothing too hard for Him.

He knew, out of the fullness of his everyday experience, that the *Lord was at hand*—standing at his side, fighting his battles with him, going before him to open closed doors and to make rough places smooth. Christ had never let him down. St. Paul’s first word to us, then, is a singing command to *rejoice*, for his Lord and our Lord is standing right beside us and He will never let us down.

The second requirement is a growing understanding and love for the God we worship, and this takes practice. We don’t become good athletes by running a race or batting a ball once in a while. We don’t arrive at the top of the mountain by merely looking at it. We don’t become effective prayers by dipping

into the Bible or saying the Lord's Prayer now and then.

Brother Lawrence, the humble little medieval monk, practiced the Presence of God all the time. He learned the highest art of meditation, and he knew how to carry the consciousness of God's presence with him wherever he went. The Lord was indeed "at hand" for him.

I suspect, however, that even Brother Lawrence *started* somewhere. Perhaps it was in those first waking hours in the morning when, instead of doing what we so often do—awake in the backwash of a bad dream or of an anxiety carried over from the day before—he started his day with the realization that the Lord was "at hand," and looked on Him as He was: "the light of the world, the way, the truth and the life."

We can do the same. The New Testament gives us a faultless portrait of Jesus the man, and Jesus the perfect reflection of what God is like. Every human and divine quality met in Him. The beauty of it is that He says we can know both these human and divine qualities if we lose ourselves in Him. He wants us to have these qualities, He wants us to have Him; and if we practice His Presence the first thing every morning He will go with us through the rest of the

day. We can start each day as the author of this exquisite poem starts his:

“Still, still with Thee when purple morning breaketh
When the bird waketh and the shadows flee.
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.
Alone with Thee, amidst the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature, newly born,
Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.” *

As we grow to love Him it will become as natural as breathing, to turn to Him in prayer. They say that Jesus' life was a lived-out prayer. Those who have tried it know the rich sense of wholeness and adventure that come from practicing His Presence as Brother Lawrence practiced it so successfully.

A simple French peasant used to slip quietly into his little country church every evening after the day's work. A priest came by one day and asked him what he was praying about, and the peasant replied, “Oh, I just look up at Him and He looks down at me.” That is the essence of fellowship.

After letting the wonderful assurance of God's presence fill our hearts and minds, our requests come tumbling to our lips. St. Paul tells us to be “anxious for nothing”; in other words, “Don't worry about

* *We Can Pray*, published by The Forward Movement Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

anything." This does not mean that our minds are to abdicate. It does mean, however, that anxiety is like static in the air waves—it prevents clear reception.

So let us try to clear our minds of the thousand gnawing doubts and fears and worries that assail us, or, rather, let us open our minds to God and let Him clear them. "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Don't worry—pray! We may want to pray for our own needs and the needs of our relatives and friends. We all need to ask that God will show us our weaknesses and turn them from weakness into strength. It may be that we need more *endurance*, or more *courage*, or more *wisdom*, or more *strength* to cope with life's problems. Similarly, those about us have needs. Who of us does not know of breaking homes, of breaking hearts? Who of us these days does not know people filled with fear, hatred, despair, insecurity—people in the grip of bad habits? Often, these are people we love, these people in pain and sorrow and fear, and they need our prayers.

Then there are our wider concerns, the bewildering questions that we must begin to deal with now if we are ever to have in the world that "peace which is the fruit of righteousness." We are all Christians, and the first duty of every Christian—in peace as in

war—is *prayer*! For, as I have already pointed out, we can affect the decisions of statesmen and generals and admirals and labor leaders and economists and educators, and all those in positions of responsibility, through prayer.

There is no use in sitting down and wringing our hands and thinking defeatist thoughts, and saying defeatist things about the wickedness of the world and the hopelessness of trying to do anything about it because history repeats itself, etc., etc.

History, the dark side of history, need not repeat itself. If enough people pray we can influence the thoughts and actions of the people in positions of power, and all the little people who follow them. Why shouldn't statesmen, economists, and educators come to think God's thoughts after Him? Why shouldn't they turn to God for wisdom and strategy rather than yielding to the pressures of self-interested men and groups of men, which is so often the case now?

Then, again, this world is full of social problems that bother us. There are racial tensions, juvenile delinquency, class hatreds, national hatreds. We talk a great deal about these things. Do we *pray* about them? God is concerned about every single relationship between men that is not working according to His laws of love and harmony.

The nations of the world are trying desperately to find some formula on which to build a just and lasting peace. The methods used by Russia are giving every democratic Christian nation growing concern. We do not see how we can reconcile the Christian and democratic way, which demands good ends by the use of equally good means, with the Communistic way, which claims that the end justifies any means, no matter how brutal and immoral. This deep idealogical conflict requires our prayer, offered as sincerely as any prayer we raised to God in the midst of war. We need to pray that the people of the world will be delivered from dictators and totalitarians, exploiters, and oppressors of the meek, remembering that there are also ruthless men in our own nation. We need to pray that the plots and plans of evil leaders and false prophets be brought to nought. At the same time we need to keep in mind, in righteous indignation against ruthless leaders, that no one is beyond the reach of God's redemptive power to change. We can safely put these men in God's hands, asking Him to deal with them as He sees fit, according to His divine justice and His divine wisdom.

You may say, "How can one person's prayers affect questions like these?" You are not only one person—you are one of millions of people in the world who are daily lifting their prayers to God in

one mighty chorus. Every single prayer of every single one of us comes before God if we lift it to Him with all our hearts, and if our motives in prayer are pure.

It may help us with our petitions and intercessions if we keep a list and concentrate on a few each day—two or three relatives and friends and their needs; one or two great social, industrial, or international issues.

“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” We give thanks at the end of our petitions and intercessions, because we know that all of our concerns have now been brought to His attention and are now in His keeping. We can trust them with Him, for in His own good time—if we are *believing* and *expectant*—God will work in these lives and situations to bring about a change for the better. Hasn’t the great apostle also promised us that “all things work together for good to them that love God”? We can rest our prayers in this promise with thankful hearts.

One of the most important and one of the least followed aspects of prayer is *listening*. St. Paul does not specifically mention this aspect of prayer in this great passage, but it is implied both here and in the whole New Testament, especially in the Book of Acts.

If we lift our hearts and minds and souls to God,

if He is "at hand," walking beside us down the road of life, if He is our Father, our Guide, our Friend, it is foolish not to believe that He will speak to us when we speak to Him. He guides us in many ways. We all have had moments when a sudden flood of light has been thrown on a question to which we have vainly sought an answer. Many of us have received His direction through the advice of some friend, through circumstances, even through a still, small voice speaking clearly in our souls, telling us where to go, what to do, how to act, what to say in a given situation.

If our lives are poised in Him, then we become His instruments which He can use at will. The story in Acts 10 is a beautiful illustration of this. Peter, that hot-headed and weak-kneed apostle, has been turned through Christ's forgiveness and faith in him into such an instrument. Peter, after much trial and error, had learned to listen to God. His receiving set was at last in good order.

Another man, a Roman soldier and a sincere seeker after truth, had also learned to listen to God. To the seeker God sent a message. He told him to send for Peter and that Peter would tell him what to do. To Peter, God also spoke, first through a vision and then through a series of commands. It was harder for Peter to hear and obey than it was for the Roman.

Peter had to overcome national custom and national prejudice in order to obey—but he did so. Two men listened and obeyed, and the result was that two men were brought together beyond national barriers and national prejudices, and began that great chain of events which has led to the carrying the Gospel of Christ to nearly every country of the world and is fulfilling Christ's own final command, "Go ye into all the world."

Jesus wants us to have the kind of relationship with Him that Peter had with Him. He has promised us that if we will become loving and obedient instruments He will send us His Holy Spirit to comfort us, guide us, act through us, *empower* us.

His plan of strategy hasn't changed. He will not be satisfied until the whole world is brought to His feet and His way. We can be His instruments for the accomplishment of this mighty purpose. If we love we will listen. If we listen we *will act*.

These, then, are some of the pillars of an effective prayer-like—Thanksgiving, Communion, Petition, Intercession, Listening. St. Paul sums it all up with the beautiful benediction, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The final word is peace—God's seal of peace. We can pass through this troubled world, live in the midst of pain and

sorrow—being in the main stream of life as the followers of Christ have always been, and yet have “the peace of God” in our hearts because He gives it to us if we are constant in prayer.

III

GROUP PRAYER

This is a group age. Rugged individualism seems to be giving way to group action. It is true that the initiative and resourcefulness of free men helped win the war. It is also true that initiative and resourcefulness were co-ordinated in small groups and units. Those small groups and units were, in turn, linked with larger groups, and so on up to the great joint high command with its mighty war potential. We are all familiar with the words "unit," "outfit," "combat team," and with all that they imply of fellowship and teamwork, mutual sacrifice and effectiveness.

As we turn from war to peace, we become aware of other groups, equally close-knit, and dedicated to construction and reconstruction—groups of scientists, doctors, educators, engineers, and even statesmen, who know that on the will to pool their wisdom and discoveries with each other depends the world's recovery in the years ahead. But the least known and yet the most hope-inspiring and the most effective

groups of all have been, and still are, the honeycomb of small anonymous cells in every nation that often, at peril of life, have met regularly for prayer and mutual encouragement. These groups have been meeting in fuelless homes all across Europe, in sod huts in northern Norway, in underground hideouts in Germany and Russia; in Africa, India, China, the Americas. Everywhere this great growing network of God's people is coming together to pray that the peace may be built according to God's pattern, not according to man's.

Jesus tells us that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in the midst.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones says that "the future of the world may well be determined by small groups of people praying, thinking and acting beyond the rest."

In America these groups are to be found in homes, in offices, in factories, in railroad stations, in hospitals, in schools, in local and state and national capitals. We automatically think of church when we think of prayer. These groups have their roots in the church, and they flower in many ways. Their seedlings are whirled away by the wind of the spirit, to fall and, in turn, take root in every area of a nation's life.

A noonday siren sounds shrilly and its echoes reverberate along the dark railway tracks under the station. The empty car is cold and silent, waiting to

be hooked to the next express being made up for Chicago or Montreal. Quietly a man enters and sits down in an end seat, then another man and another, until six have gathered. Two are in porters' uniforms, one is a messenger, one a soldier, and the rest are in business suits. One of the porters speaks quietly; he greets the others and asks them to tell him of what's been happening. He mentions answered prayer. The messenger responds eagerly; he tells how he has mediated successfully in a tense situation between the head messenger and some of the boys—a situation for which he had asked their prayers the week before. The young soldier says he has been sleeping better, his nerves are steadier, that he is beginning to feel that God has a job for him to do—perhaps in the ministry. He thanks the others for their prayers. One of those in a business suit, a Labor leader, thanks them for praying that he may be shown how to deal with some left-wing agitators in his organization. Then the leader asks them what is most deeply on their hearts for that day. One asks that they read together a passage from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Another that they pray for the starving people throughout the world. Another for God's answer to the racial tension in the United States, and still another that they pray for the President.

The messenger asks for further prayers for him in

his efforts to mediate. The CIO leader requests prayers for his mother, who is very ill. The young veteran that he be led in choosing his life work.

Then they all fall silent, and the car is dark and still again. But this time it is a stillness vibrant with Life, punctuated with voices praying, expressing grateful thanks and pouring out concern for God's world, God's people, their own needs. They ask for more courage, more power, more faith, just as the early disciples poured out their hearts in those quiet upper rooms in Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem so long ago. I wonder if the passengers on the Chicago or Montreal express feel a presence, an atmosphere, a sense of warmth as they flock into this car later in the day. Certainly those who have prayed together go out to their different jobs with a new courage and a new zest.

There are other groups like this. Six housewives, Catholic and Protestant, pray together every week around a dining-room table in a city home. Four or five businessmen and industrialists meet for prayer before breakfast in downtown clubs all across America. Senators and Representatives pray together in small groups in the capitol in Washington several early mornings a week. These people, whether they be four or twelve or thirty, believe that *prayer* is *power* and that behind all leaders of church and state

there must be prayer. They believe that no personal or national or international problem is too hard for God to solve. And they know that He hears their prayers—and heeds.

Each group has its own personality, its own characteristics, its own particular concerns; yet there are some suggestions born of the experience of effective prayer groups which may prove helpful to those new to group prayer. Generally speaking, every ingredient of effective personal prayer can be applied to effective group prayer. When Thanksgiving, Communion, Petition, Intercession and Listening become a united rather than an individual effort there is an increased power and richness in the result. In a little pamphlet called "The Gathered Meeting" Thomas Kelly the Quaker mystic describes for us the unity of spirit and power that comes when "two or three are gathered together" in our Lord's name:

"A quickening Presence pervades us, breaking down some part of the special privacy and isolation of our individual lives and blending our spirits within a super-individual Life and Power. An objective, dynamic Presence enfolds us all, nourishes our souls, speaks glad, unutterable comfort within us, and quickens us in depths that had before been slumbering.

"In the gathered meeting the sense is present that

a new Life and Power has entered our midst. And we know not only that we stand erect in the holy Presence but also that others sitting with us are experiencing the same exaltation and access of power.

"Again and again this community of life and guidance from the Presence in the midst is made clear by the way the spoken words uttered in the meeting join on to one another and to our inward thoughts.

"The experience has a knowledge-quality. The covering of God in the gathered meeting carries with as it the sense of insight, of knowledge. We know Him as we have not known Him before. The secrets of this amazing world have been in some larger degree laid bare. We know life, and the world, and ourselves, from within, anew. And, lo, there we have seen God."

A good beginning is to repeat the Lord's Prayer together and to give thanks. We have so much to give thanks for: for *answered prayer*, the knowledge of God's love and presence, the freedom to pray together without danger, as is still not the case in some countries in the world. We can each give thanks as we are led, or our leader can give thanks for us. This United Thanksgiving draws us quickly into a unit and into an attitude of expectancy and receptivity.

Just as united Thanksgiving has a fulness far beyond individual Thanksgiving, so united meditation

brings out, like a rich mosaic, the meaning and power of the passage chosen for meditation.

There are various methods of meditation and there are certain basic rules underlying all the methods. They can be summed up in a few words: read, consider, resolve, pray. Choose a passage from Scripture, read it slowly and carefully several times, so that its full meaning can be grasped. Consider its application to you and your problems, and to your world and its problems. Resolve that you will endeavor to meet the challenge that it holds for you. Pray that God will show you how to translate this passage into daily action. For example, imagine the full implication of that amazing verse in John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Many minds focusing on this dazzling promise can inevitably draw from it more meaning than can one mind. Recently thirty women took this verse as their united meditation. Two words stood out for them—"receive" and "believe." Apparently the only two conditions to becoming a son of God are the ability to receive Christ and the ability to believe that He was everything He claimed to be. To "receive" in this way is so different from the general conception of the word. The usual order is to struggle, to strive, to wrestle, to analyze. Here one is merely commanded

to throw open the doors of one's mind and heart and soul and His living Presence in.

As these women meditated further, the astounding result of "receiving" and "believing" began to dawn on them. "To them gave he power to become the [daughters] of God." It is difficult to visualize this promise. Sons and daughters of God resemble Him—fearless, confident, humble, compassionate, unconquerable; men and women on whom fear, resentment, selfishness, prejudice, pettiness have no hold. They are raw material for a warless world.

After such a meditation we slip into united petition with trust and faith. We lay our needs and the needs of our friends before God with greater confidence.

Our personal needs generally fall into three categories:

1. The need for release from some pressing personal fear, anxiety, or resentment.
2. The need for clear direction in regard to some particular problem or circumstance.
3. The need for bodily, mental, and spiritual healing.

These personal needs are best prayed for in very small groups, where mutual confidence is possible. Or in a large group we may merely ask the others to pray with us for victory over a personal problem and direction to a personal decision.

The needs of our relatives and friends follow closely the pattern of our own needs. If we enter into these personal petitions in the unity of spirit brought about by united meditation, we can rest assured that a change for the better will take place in the life and circumstance of every person for whom we pray. For prayer opens doors and lets God in.

One Sunday morning the telephone rang. I lifted the receiver. The broken little voice of a young mother informed me that her new baby daughter had just been taken to the hospital critically ill with pneumonia. She asked me to pray. As it was Sunday, we were able to have prayers in church.

I also telephoned several mutual friends and called my own family together. Several times that day and the next we knelt to pray for that little family. We asked for comfort and reassurance for the young parents. We asked that God would guide the doctors and the nurses. We put the little one definitely into His loving care, asking for her life if it should be His will. By the following evening I had a definite assurance in my heart that the baby would get well.

When I inquired for her I heard she had a twenty-five per cent chance of recovery. Our assurance did not waver. We continued to pray together, and three days later the baby was on the road to recovery. You can imagine what this whole experience meant

to the young parents. How it strengthened the faith of my family group. God revealed Himself in a fresh way to all of us through it. A year later the young mother writes as follows.

Dear—

Friday

The story of Janey's recovery has helped in several instances in the last year.

One day last spring the mother of two little boys in my Sunday School class apologized for their irregularity in attendance. She explained that her baby was in the hospital with pneumonia. The case was similar to Janey's except that her baby had developed a heart condition and was by no means out of the woods.

Our story gave the mother new faith. She said she too believed that with God all things are possible. We prayed for her little girl and every Sunday in spite of her work with two little ones either she or her husband brought the little fellows to church. Even after the baby was released from the hospital, they continued to make the effort to come out on Sunday mornings. Two weeks ago the mother brought all three children to church. The baby is a real roly-poly, and the good news is that her heart condition has cleared up entirely.

In the last months there have been three serious illnesses in our apartment building. Since the prayers of others had been so important in Janey's recovery, I was able to pray for help for my neighbors.

The little girl who was completely paralyzed with polio is walking and there is every hope she will recover completely. They live directly over us, and we have missed her little footsteps so!

An eleven year old boy on our first floor has been in the hospital with a mysterious ailment. The Doctor could find nothing to account for his high temperature. X-rays revealed nothing. You can imagine the concern. I think everyone in the building prayed for Scott. Yesterday he was out playing.

Yesterday, too, the girl for whom I prayed at Calvary one Sunday night, was out alone for the first time in many months. I had tried to help her, but everyone worried that food, visiting, talking, might do more harm than good. My father's suggestion that I leave the matter in God's hands seemed not enough, especially when I wanted Ellen to know that I was trying to help her. But that's what we did. We sent her the flowers from our altar at church to let her know that we would remember her in our prayers. That was three weeks ago. I was startled when I saw Ellen yesterday. She looked so much better than I had seen her look for so many months. She said one day she just woke up feeling better. I'm sure God has heard and answered the prayers of her friends.

You see, how the experience we had has let others know of God's help, and how even in the cases where I did not use the story directly, it was the help that you and your friends gave me that has enabled me to seek God's help for my friends.

Our concerns in prayer must carry out beyond our friends and our families if they are to affect our world. Great souls dare to pray for great things and expect great answers. We can all be great souls and cast our concern like a lariat, out and around people and situations far beyond our immediate interest.

The answers that come to these wider prayers are as amazing as those that come to our personal prayers. They are a mighty confirmation that God not only watches over His individual children, but over His world as well. Following are some subjects for united intercession which a number of prayer groups have taken up, one by one. I have already mentioned three pressing problems about which we can pray. The others can be suggested under three headings: *Our Community, Our Nation, Our world.*

Our Community. In our communities we find in embryo all of the problems that afflict the nation. Our communities can be the seedbeds of all kinds of social frictions, or they can become the seedbeds of social progress. What do we see only too often when we look at many of our communities?

Racial prejudice

Class prejudice—industrial warfare

National prejudices—our attitudes towards the so-called foreigners in our midst

Broken homes

Juvenile delinquency

Political graft

Crime

Inadequate schooling

Inadequate social services

Inadequate housing, health and employment programs

Dorothy was troubled. It wasn't the accustomed roar of the elevated trains crashing along so close to the kitchen windows. It wasn't the noisy, dirty street, or the drunks reeling up and down the avenue at all hours of the day and night. It was the teen-age kids gathered in knots on dirty stoops or playing around outside the saloons. There were so many of them, and they seemed so aimless and uncared for. One night Hazel walked home with her after a meeting at the church. What she saw troubled her too. She and Dorothy had been in the habit of praying together, and they decided that night to pray every time they met that God would put it into the hearts of responsible people to do something for the uncared for youngsters in our city and in our neighborhood. They met for an hour's prayer once a week for a month. At the end of the month they heard that a woman from their own parish, a woman whom they scarcely knew, had been appointed by the mayor to co-ordinate and improve all the agencies for the prevention of delinquency in the city.

They continued to pray. Very shortly a committee of leading citizens in their neighborhood was formed to co-operate with the church in organizing the right

kind of recreational opportunities for teen-age children. A number of projects have been started by the Police Athletic League, the Scouts, the neighborhood churches, and a Community Association, all of which have proven a great success. These projects are growing all the time in numbers and effectiveness.

Several months passed, and our friends were told that the members of a Negro church in their city with whom we had close association had started a summer recreation project for all the three hundred children on their overcrowded, poverty-stricken block. This block had made newspaper headlines in the spring because a Negro girl of eleven had stabbed another little Negro girl to death with an ice pick in a street row. At the end of the summer a letter from the pastor of that church confirmed the efficacy of prayer.

"It is simply incredible the way God has blessed us with people and children and money [he wrote]. We have been down low, but each week we come through with more than enough to pay all bills.

"But out and above all is the spirit that has been created. Actually, the spirit on the street has changed. The kids get along with each other; people say the street is cleaner; there has not been one fight in the street recently, except a little scrap between two nine-year-olds that I went out into the street and stopped by catching each one by an arm and leading them up

into my house, where we talked it out, and they went out to the crowd as friends.

"And the general reception—not a criticism. We have more than ninety per cent of the children on the street that come regularly and behave wonderfully. It is actually thrilling and I know that a lot of faith and persistence and vision came to me through that fellowship and prayer we had with you."

It is even possible that the prayers of these two humble, unknown women, linked with those of thousands of heartsick parents all over the country, have had a direct bearing on the national publicity campaign which has been bringing the tragedy of juvenile delinquency so forcibly to the attention of the American public.

Until we learn how to bring the full power of prayer to bear on the concrete evils in our midst, we are merely religious romancers, escaping from reality with beautiful thoughts. Real prayer changes things, it inspires to constructive action, it produces dynamic results. Try to visualize what could happen if your community had within it one or two groups praying constantly for its sore spots. You would soon find individuals coming to the front prepared to eliminate the sore spots as effectively as in the case of the Negro children in the city block I know.

Our Nation. Are we satisfied with America as she is?

Do we believe that she is a Christian nation?

Do we believe that God is on her side?

Or do we know that while she was conceived in faith and built on a high conception of freedom, rooted in the Christian ethic, she is still far from ideal?

By our prayers we can help America to grow up—to attain her full moral and spiritual stature. We can tackle in prayer America's sins and problems, which are only the problems of our communities on a larger scale—race, class, and national prejudices springing from fear, ignorance, and self-interest.

Broken homes and juvenile delinquency are the result of selfishness, irresponsibility, and lack of love.

Political graft, industrial conflict, and crime spring from greed and the lust for power.

Inadequate hospitalization, schools, churches, institutions for the helpless and dependent are the result of public apathy and irresponsibility.

Prayer helps us focus the shafts of God's power on the ugly roots from which such problems sprout and flower. It opens the way for us to deal with the people who cause the problems and with the people who can help to solve them.

All Americans need our prayers. Was there ever

a time when our President, our Secretary of State, or our representatives to the United Nations needed our prayers more urgently than they need them in these critical days, when so much depends on their wisdom and their courage?

We are all part of the pattern that makes America, and we all need to be freed from the sins that keep America small where she should be great, enslaved where she should be freed. It is not unpatriotic to be realistic about America's sins. Indeed, it is required of each Christian to see America as she is and as she might be, and to bridge the gap with his prayers.

We must pray, too, that America in her relations with other nations will fulfil the inspired vision of our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln—"With malice towards none, with charity for all . . . firm in the right as God gives us to see the right."

Our World. God sees the world quite differently from the way we see it. He sees it as a vast family, and He longs to bring this family to a common recognition of Him as the Universal Father. The goal of family life is that each member of it grow up to be a mature, intelligent, well-rounded man or woman, a creative person and a creative citizen in the nation. God's goal for world family life is that its members grow up to be fully-developed, creative citizens in the world.

In God's family there are three races of different colors—black, yellow, and white. There are many national cultures or ways of life and many interpretations of religion. Some members of the family have been following after false gods, and they must be restrained and turned away from vain pursuits. No members of the family are perfect. Yet God must want each to complement the other rather than to compete with or seek to destroy the other. He must want each to serve the other rather than to fear the other. He must want each to concern itself with the full development of the others rather than to limit its goal to full protection of its own racial interests.

If we are to pray effectively for the world we must seek to enter into the plan of God for the world. The Bible, especially the New Testament, is the best blueprint of *God's World Order* we know.

As we understand and give assent to His plan, we can enter into united intercession for the world. We can pray for all the nations of the world that their leaders may come to know God's mind and that their people may carry out His will. We will all need each other's prayers as we set about the colossal task of building a peace.

The relatives of our war dead need our prayers. Those in charge of making and distributing all the vast machinery of reconstruction need our prayers.

The ministers, doctors, nurses, teachers, and social workers in every nation need our prayers. So does every humble citizen, that hatred and despair and cynicism may be replaced by hope and courage and the will to rebuild on sounder foundations.

We can pray for our former enemies. It is constructive to pray that they may be turned from their false faiths and see and make restitution for their sins, so that they may be re-established in the family of nations.

It is destructive to wish to see the extermination of every member of nations we do not like. God has no such wish. They are His children too. He would rather see them redeemed than exterminated. He might have wished to see the whole human race exterminated as just punishment for our sins. Instead, He redeemed us through the death of His Son on a cross.

We can pray for the Christians in the war-ravaged nations. These people have held the Faith with a heroism that defies description, and it is upon these staunch minorities that God will depend for the rebuilding of His world.

Early in 1946 an election took place in France which resulted in a resounding defeat for the Communist element seeking to gain control of the French government, and marked the emergence of a new

party made up of Christians of every denomination all dedicated to serve the people of France according to Christian principles. Is it possible that this was an answer to prayer—this united expression of Christian conviction in an unhappy and divided nation?

Was it perhaps another answer to prayer that in the Russian zone in Germany, where an election was allowed to take place in 1946, that, in spite of Russian confidence that a Communist coalition would be voted into power, 53 per cent of a 3,000,000 total vote was recorded against it? The surprising thing was that 700,000 votes went to the Christian party, a Catholic group, and 300,000 to a strong Protestant group.

In Holland the people have turned to the pastors, both Catholic and Protestant, for leadership in the reconstruction of their country, because these heroic men first openly defied the Nazi tyranny from their pulpits and then helped to lead the underground movement with the support of the prayer of every Dutch Christian.

Are you shocked that these answers to prayer seem to have a political angle? Let me ask you a question. In a country in which totalitarian groups have either had control or are seeking to gain control, is it wrong for Christians to seek to put Christians in public

office, so that the principles for which Christians stand may prevail?

We can pray for the world Christian community. The Church of Christ has been established, often against almost insuperable odds, in all but two countries in the world, Afghanistan and Tibet. We have come near to obeying Jesus' last great command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." The Church of Christ is the only World Community. In some nations it has a very tenuous hold. To the soldiers in Christ's army of Kingdom-builders our prayers are like the dawn barrage that weakens the beachhead defenses before the troops attack. With our prayers we at home can be part of the world-wide offensive of the Church of Christ. If we really believe the first great petition of the Lord's Prayer we will throw our whole hearts into this prayer for the World Church and its various representatives in the far corners of the earth.

In an article on February 16, 1947, entitled "The One Great Church," *The Christian Century* prints a glorious panorama of Christian unity and accomplishment throughout the world. It is like a bugle call of encouragement to those of us who feel perhaps that our prayers have fallen on deaf ears in spite of all our efforts and the efforts of those who have gone before us.

"Hear now [he writes] a story for our encouragement. . . . While the story here told in which many scattered facts are pieced together, is not a fairy story, one is reminded of an old, old tale in *The Thousand and One Nights*. One of the heroes had a magic tent so tiny that it could be folded in the hollow of his hand. Yet when released, it spread out far and wide, forming a canopy of protection for the whole city. Religious faith is like a magic tent. It can be compressed to fit the needs of a small group, or either a single soul, but when it is set free it expands into a network of faiths, feelings, hopes, laws, ideals, insight, and influence, making a shelter for all the holy things of life, giving it both stability and sanctity.

"The greatest marvel of our age is not radium, nor radio, nor radar, nor atomic energy, but the emerging oneness of the spiritual community. . . .

"The greatest advance of the church in its whole history was between 1813 and 1914, a vast, far-ramifying expansion. Such was the great work of the little churches. Indeed, the churches had been so busy pushing back the Christian frontier in China, in Japan, in Africa, in India, that they did not hear the rumble of subterranean fires and forces underneath the surface of the modern world. Then, suddenly, came the explosion of the First World War. The land of Luther, the land of Wesley, the land of Joan of Arc were grappling at each other's throats in an ecumenical disaster. No wonder the church was stunned, almost stupefied. Something had gone tragically wrong on the home front. Christian strategy changed; an ecumenical movement was formed to meet an ecumenical calamity!

"As soon as the smoke of battle had lifted, in spite of spiritual fatigue and the blurred cynicism of the hour there

began a series of world councils of the churches, such as had not been held for centuries. Simultaneously, spontaneously, moved by a profound impulse, the churches began to come together, seeking a new reach and range of fellowship; drawn together, jammed together by the need of the world and the hunger of the Christian heart. It was magnificent and moving. New doors of understanding were opened, new windows of insight, and the church was marching under lifting skies into lengthening vistas.

"The first conference was held at Geneva in 1920; a second on Life and Work at Stockholm five years later; a third on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927; and the next year came a memorable meeting in Jerusalem, the old gray city which for ages has been an altar of prayer and praise and prophecy. Two meetings were held in 1937. One was at Oxford, never to be forgotten for the communion service in St. Mary's Church, a glorious Gothic structure with haunting memories and mellow associations. There the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrated the holy communion, inviting the men of all churches to unite in the sacrament. Some of us had dreamed of such a scene, but we had not hoped to live to see it.

"At Edinburgh, the same year, the Life and Work and the Faith and Order movements were blended and a World Council of Churches set in process of formation. Christian people were discovering their basic unity and giving it outward and visible shape. No one was asked to give up anything; all were asked to bring everything they loved—their traditions, their old and sweet customs, their distinctive insights and forms of worship—into a common fellowship; it was a unity upon a new basis. It was called the 'Ecumen-

ical Movement.' The word was new. It meant 'universal,' or 'worldwide,' and all churches found in it 'overtones of prophecy as well as of memory,' in contrast to 'catholic,' which, oddly enough, had become limited by some prefix. A new word was needed to describe a new spirit and fact, a coming together of Christian people for which there was no parallel in times past, a mighty commonwealth of the followers of Christ.

"In 1938 a conference was held in Madras, India, owing to the advance made there toward unity; and a final meeting came together at Amsterdam just before the Second World War. In the same year (1939) the constitution of the World Council of Churches was drawn up and signed in Holland—a document which may mean more for the future of humanity than the Charter of the United Nations. The nations may not stay united. Their organization is less an organism than a contraption which may come unstuck any day. But while the nations are trying to come together—hesitantly, with many reservations, many fears and suspicions—the Christian churches *are* coming together, and having once clasped hands they will never let go; they will work together in faith, freedom and fellowship. Once again the church may save civilization.

"Such, in swift survey, is the story of the greatest fact of our generation—a deep current underflowing our crisis and confusion. At least it shows us that the church, so far from jogging along in horse and buggy when the world has television and rides in jet-propelled planes, is not asleep, but awake and alive to the issues and desperate dangers of our atomic age. Already the sectarian walls have been so breached as to allow a tourist elephant to pass through, with

baggage. The One Great Church is at our door; it rests on the thoughts of our hearts whether we learn to live in its faith and fellowship."

As we intercede unitedly for our community, our nation and our world, we will be lifted out of our petty concerns with the troubles that merely affect us personally, and we will see our own lives in the perspective of the whole national and world family. We will begin to visualize what our Lord had in mind when he prayed, "That they all may be one," and we will begin to see ourselves as links in the chain of events that will change that vision into the eventual Reality.

We cannot conceive of the apostles starting out on their first great spiritual offensive without listening. We read of the mighty experience of Pentecost in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. There in that upper room, united in their belief in Christ and in an eager mood of expectancy, they received their marching orders and were empowered to carry them out. They had had a long period of indoctrination; they had spent many hours in prayer. The great day came for them on Pentecost, and they were ready to march.

March they did, straight into the heart of the pagan world. The Holy Spirit guided them step by step. He told them where to go, what to say, what to do.

Armed with the word of God, the love of God, and the power of God, they were unconquerable.

Why has our *level of expectancy* become so low that God cannot guide and use us as He guided and used them? True, these were picked men, entrusted with a particularly arduous mission, but we, each of us, have a place in furthering God's strategy according to our abilities and callings, and no one else can quite fill our place.

Therefore, it is of supreme importance that we listen together, after giving thanks together, meditating together, and praying together. Some of us may receive individual answers to individual questions. To some of us who have come to cross-roads in our lives will be shown which road to follow. Some of us will be comforted or reassured, according to our need.

We may receive a united commission to carry out together.

Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "When God wants me to do something He always finds a way of letting me know about it." It is dangerous to pray together to be given a commission to carry out. God sets no such limitations upon us as we often set on ourselves. He has great undertakings in His mind all of the time, and He is constantly looking for human instruments through whom He can work to ac-

comply with these undertakings. God will not lead us into anything beyond our strength or abilities, but He will bring all of our abilities and strength into play if we will let Him. I have known small prayer groups to have very specific action given them to carry out together, action that has had very wide repercussions, some of them as wide as the field of international relations. The interesting thing about it is that each member of the group has had his particular part to play, just as each musician in a well-trained orchestra plays his own instrument in a great symphony, with God Himself as the conductor. The following two illustrations describing two commissions of a totally different nature will illustrate what I mean. Several church leaders of different denominations met regularly for prayer. While they were listening together one morning, it came to them strongly to write to the President of the United States to ask him to sign a bill which would authorize the sending of food into a former enemy country. These men knew from inside sources available to their church that an acute situation, due to food shortage, was developing in this country out of which evil men were daily making capital for their own sinister ends. For some reason the bill awaiting the President's signature was being held up. These men wrote him immediately, and a few days later were informed

by his secretary that the bill had been signed. Four unknown men took significant Christian responsibility, and their action had a vital effect on millions of people. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if these four men had not obeyed God's leading.

It was a Thursday morning during the war and six of us were gathered, as we were every Thursday, around Elizabeth's dining-table. As our custom was, each of us laid some special concern before the others.

My concern that morning was for the thousands of wounded boys in great hospitals in our area to whom no church people seemed to be ministering. I knew large organizations like the U.S.O., the Red Cross, the Theatre Wing had access to these hospitals; but the service I visualized was of a more personal kind. I knew that many of these boys were far from home, suffering homesickness as well as all the other forms of pain, both mental and physical, accompanying long confinement in hospital. I knew from experience that there are certain things that even the best medical care is not able to accomplish. Only genuine and disinterested friendship, understanding and prayer could meet certain needs in the hearts of these young victims of war. I had been praying to be shown how to proceed in this obvious duty, and

by a rather remarkable series of circumstances I had received permission from the naval doctor in charge to call at a large naval hospital in our area and invite to our home for week-ends boys who were well enough to come. Two or three friends in our church were calling with me already, and we had met a number of the patients. But we needed the support of a group who would pray regularly with us for the healing and encouragement of these boys. The six were enthusiastic. One of them offered to call with me regularly, and the rest promised to pray with us and to help in any other way possible. So much has happened that I should like to call our venture "A Romance of Answered Prayer." The right people have offered to call at the hospital. Jane is the wife of a retired naval captain, and has an intuitive understanding of what boys like most. Elizabeth is beautiful and young and marvelously helpful to the boys who have stopped trying to help themselves and need the dynamic encouragement she always gives them. Vicky would gather a whole ward around the piano when she started on "Boogie Woogie," and Harriet, the Wave officer in charge of the Occupational Therapy Department, took it on herself for more than a year to put us in touch with the officers and men whom she thought we could befriend.

It has all developed so naturally. Chaplains, doc-

tors, nurses have introduced us to the boys whom we might help. The boys themselves have introduced us to their friends. But I can best tell the story by telling you of some of these boys and the fight they have made, with the help of our prayers, to get back into the main stream of life and make a contribution, in spite of permanent disabilities incurred in war.

Pete, who has spent many week-ends with us, had been a seaman on what the Navy calls a "tin can." His "tin can" was torpedoed in the North Atlantic on a cold January day, and the crew jumped overboard for their lives. Most of them were rescued after five hours of swimming in ice-cold water. Pete's foot had been shattered by a piece of shrapnel, and the young Navy doctor had to set nineteen bones in an operation lasting twelve hours. For over a year, in first one hospital in Europe and then one here, that boy fought a losing battle to save his foot. No one could decide for him that it was wiser to let the doctors take off the foot, and ultimately save Pete's health and usefulness. He had to make the decision himself. When he asked us we told him what we thought, but we didn't press our view. He was one of a very large family, and he told me that when they were children, in spite of the size of the family and his mother's not too good health, every Sunday morning they were all washed and taken to church, to sit

like a row of steps in one long pew. Every Sunday he wheeled himself down to church at the hospital, and, finally, one day he felt that he could let them take off his foot, because he knew in his heart that God would not let him down and would give him enough faith and courage to make a good thing of life in spite of his loss. He was in my home very recently, a new Pete in body and mind, minus one foot, it is true; but that no longer worries him. We always have a lot of young people around for our week-ends, and young people have a way of making light of such things. On this occasion, as the evening wore on, he and Natalie decided that they would dance in a certain style, which Pete said was the best style for him because he could stand in one spot and jiggle up and down on one foot and enjoy it as much as if he were waltzing from one end of the room to the other. He promised to give her a real whirl when he received the new foot, which he intended to name "Natalie, Jr." When the new foot arrived and while he was learning to walk on it, he undertook to run the movie machine for the boys in the psycho-neurotic wards, because he wanted to help fellows worse off than himself, and had learned that he felt much happier when he was helping others than he felt when he was sitting around brooding over his hard luck.

Pete is a veteran now, happily preparing for his life work at a large state university.

Bruce, a young marine from the south, came to us for a week-end at the time of the rumors about V-J Day. He had been one of the heroic crew of a great aircraft carrier, and, like most of the others, had been wounded in a desperate encounter with Jap suicide planes. On the evening of V-J Day, he and another Protestant boy, as well as a Catholic boy, all slipped into the church, together with the girls who were their hostesses, to offer up their own simple, sincere heart-felt prayers of thanksgiving. Bruce told me afterwards that he had never had such an enjoyable week-end since joining the service. He said that he couldn't always remember what he had done on week-ends, as the fun had been fast and furious and Monday morning memories were confused and hazy. But, somehow, this week-end was different; it had everything that he had really been looking for and really loved, home, good food, fun, all mixed with faith and affection.

As we sat in church together on Sunday morning Bruce leaned over and whispered impulsively, "If every church service was like this and gave people this kind of a lift, there wouldn't be any more wars." Bruce has been discharged now and has gone home to his beloved southland to marry the fine girl whose

prayers, he is firmly convinced, brought him through his ordeal on the carrier. Before he left the hospital we had many long talks about faith and prayer and the things in life that are worth living and dying for.

Jack had large brown eyes and curly hair. He was lying very still on the hospital cot. He smiled wanly when I spoke to him. I discovered he was a marine corporal from northern New England, a veteran of the Pacific war, so seriously wounded at Okinawa that the doctors thought he wouldn't live. His left arm was paralyzed, and he had back injuries and a serious leg injury. Elizabeth and I called on him during eight months and prayed for him constantly. Once or twice he nearly slipped away. He had been a staunch Catholic, but had become very bitter because of a wife who had deserted him while he was in the service. Slowly but surely, prayer and constant encouragement brought healing to his body and new courage to his heart. Elizabeth, being a Catholic, was particularly helpful to him. The day he was able to come to us for a week-end before his discharge was a day of rejoicing—his weight had increased from ninety-five pounds to 165 pounds. He ate us out of house and home. True, he was still wearing a brace and his left arm was weak, but his spirits were unquenchable, and he danced and played baseball and rough-housed with the rest of the youngsters to their

mutual delight. Jack is now superintendent in a factory in his home town, happy and well and ready to give a helping hand to anyone who comes his way.

One day, as I was passing through a long corridor, I noticed a nice-looking officer sitting in a wheel-chair in the door of his room. He looked friendly, so I stopped and spoke to him. He was one of those candid, outgoing people with whom it is very easy to make friends, and in the last two years he and Elizabeth and Jane and I have become lasting friends. He has meant as much to us as we have meant to him. He was seriously paralyzed in a jeep accident in Italy. Only time will tell whether he will ever be able to walk again. The injury to his body seems only to have high-lighted the strength and gaiety of his spirit. My friends and I go to be cheered up by him, and we never leave his room disappointed. His gaiety and humor are infectious, and his room is constantly filled with people, fellow officers, friends, nurses, people in trouble come to seek his help and advice. One day he and I were discussing what he might do when he left the hospital. We both agreed that his work must be in some kind of personal capacity, and it suddenly occurred to me to say to him, "C, do you know what power you have to help people and to influence people in the right direction?" He had never thought of that particularly, but he looked interested.

So, having launched out so daringly, I continued rather breathlessly. "You see, you have every excuse under the sun to have gone under, not to have been able to take it, but, instead, you seem to be stronger and finer for it all. Don't you see what you mean to the rest of us? In the first place, you shame us for fussing and fuming about all the comparatively little things that throw us. In the second place, we say to ourselves, 'If C can hold his head up and keep right on moving along, why, so can we.' In the third place, because we respect you so much we are likely to respect anything you say. In the fourth place, it gives us *hope* about human beings in general, for we can see that God has power to take hold of a human being and make a royal person out of him in the face of the most adverse circumstances." C never said whether he agreed with these conclusions, but that doesn't matter. Whether or not he ever walks on two legs again, his spirit stands upright, and it has inspired more other struggling humans to keep on trying than he will ever know.

These stories seem a rather long illustration of what can happen when a group of people in tune with one another, and with God, launch out together on a united adventure under God's leading.

Do you see why I compared such a group to an orchestra? The likeness is in the blending of the

different personalities, the part that each plays, the effect on those prayed for, and the bringing together of those praying and those prayed for into a rich and mutually enriching relationship which is the antidote to the loneliness and fear and despair so rampant in the world.

Again let me emphasize that we can become God's instruments by which He can accomplish His purposes in the world. It is good to feel that by means of our united thanksgiving and intercession and listening and action He is using us to answer, in some small measure, His Son's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

IV

PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

The Great Commandment

Do you begin to see how through our prayers we can actually become part of the new world a-building? Does this not give you a sense of high adventure and at the same time a desire to equip yourself to be a more expert builder? In the old days the experts were called master-builders, because they, above all others, knew how to lay a sound foundation and build a beautiful and lasting structure on it.

We have already pointed out that there are rules and laws which govern prayer as there are rules and laws that govern mathematics or health or any of the great sciences. Two plus two makes four. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. Mathematics and geometry are based on laws. So is prayer.

A basic law of prayer is contained in Jesus' great saying, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all*

thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

No prayer can hope to be answered which does not conform to this law. It is divided into two sections—love for God, and love for each other.

When we love someone we forget ourselves in serving him, in furthering his interests, in sacrificing for him. Therefore, to love God means forgetting ourselves in serving Him and furthering His interests. We want to see things as He sees them; we want what He wants. When we pray we identify ourselves with His will, His plan. His way. We do not seek to make Him identify Himself with our will, our plan, and our way. Someone told me recently that she was disgusted with prayer because she had been praying for something for years and it had not been answered. As we talked she suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I've been trying to bend God's will to mine, and because every bit of what I wanted did not happen overnight, I've become rebellious. I see now that God has been gradually answering my prayer all along, but I've been so blinded by my self-will that I haven't seen it."

The great classic example of selfless prayer is Jesus' own prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Here Jesus reached an ordeal in His life from which He shrank with every human instinct. Because He loved His Father so utterly and trusted Him so implicitly, He went to His Father for light and strength. "Oh, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." God's reply to Jesus must have been that He could not avert the ordeal through which Jesus was about to pass, for it was part of His great plan for the redemption of mankind. Jesus' second and third prayers in the Garden show us that He has yielded in perfect love and obedience to His Father. "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." He is willing to be the instrument through whom this redemption is to take place. In other words, He is willing to sacrifice Himself utterly to further His Father's interests and plans.

How often we beg for mercy, as Jesus begged for it, but how seldom we go the next step as Jesus did in this prayer, the step of absolute surrender to God's will and absolute faith in His love and His purpose.

"Oh, my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." This, of course, is the perfect attitude toward God. I have always felt that Jesus included us in this desperate and sacred experience for our encouragement and inspiration as we seek to love God as He did.

Jesus gave us the perfect example of faith as well

as the perfect example of selflessness in the Garden of Gethsemane. For Jesus here staked everything on a *promise* that was as yet unfulfilled—the promise that He would rise from the dead. Jesus believed that His father wanted an opportunity to show the world that nothing could successfully challenge His power or His plan—neither the plots of wicked men nor the blindness of worldly men, neither seeming defeat nor suffering or death. His was to be the last word. Resurrection! Life as the answer to evil and death! The victory of His over the will of the world! Through faith Jesus saw all these things, and dared to trust a *vision*.

No wonder He could make his following astounding promise, earlier in His ministry, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the midst of the sea and it shall be done unto thee, according to thy faith.” Jesus lifts prayer onto a level where all things are possible to the man or woman whose faith in God is absolute. If we trust Him and pray in faith, He can and will roll mountains of fear, or evil, or sickness off our shoulders; He can and will roll mountains of unbelief and sin and sickness off the shoulders of those for whom we pray; He can and will roll mountains of evil and misery off the shoulders of our world.

There is no contradiction in Jesus' mind when He tells us to expect the best from our Father, and then persist in prayer until we get it. "*Ask* and it shall be given you; *seek* and ye shall find; *knock* and it shall be opened unto you." Ask, seek, knock. In other words, *persist!* Do not let anything discourage you.

He who made sick people well and made blind people see, who could calm a storm and turn hosts of people from despair to hope, was not really a worker of magic. Jesus lived persistently in full contact with God's energy, and He persistently exposed the sorrows and sufferings of His people to the healing power of that energy. We are told that He rose up a great while before day and went up into the mountain to pray. He sometimes prayed all night. His love for God was so pure, His faith so great, His level of expectancy so consistently high that God found Him irresistible.

You may quite rightly interject here, "That is all very well, but Jesus was Divine. The same cannot be expected of us." Jesus did not hold that view. On the last night of His life He said to His disciples, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father. And whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do. . . . If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." So in His name and in

His power He expects us to do what He did, and more. It is such an astounding promise that we find it hard to take in, much less live out. But He goes further: He promises that He Himself will live in us and live it out through us. Can we expect less of Him in performance than He expects of us in faith?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." We have been tracing the attitudes in us which, added together, make up love for God. A similar yardstick can be applied to love for our neighbor.

First of all, who is our neighbor? Just the family that lives next door or the people we particularly like, or our own relatives, or people with skins of our own color, or people in our own class, or fellow Americans?

Who did Jesus consider His neighbors? Why, anyone who needed Him, anyone who was seeking Him, anyone who would trust Him, anyone who would make common cause with Him. He was so different from ourselves. He never put people in categories. He made Himself available to anyone, no matter what his nationality or creed or color or class. He was supremely conscious of human need, and everything He had to offer was available to that need.

How clearly He draws for us the picture of the

good neighbor in the story of the Samaritan traveler. The religious officials left the poor wounded man lying at the roadside as they passed by. Perhaps they were afraid the robbers would attack them—and how they talked themselves out of going to his rescue! The Good Samaritan had no such complex scruples. He saw a wounded man, his heart was moved with pity, and he did what he could for the robbers' victim. That the man was a stranger made no difference. That he was probably a Jew, whom the Samaritans despised, made no difference. The man was wounded; he might die. The Samaritan forgot himself, his religious scruples, his class, his national prejudices. All he saw was the man's need and his own ability to meet it.

The first qualification of neighborliness, therefore, is to understand that Jesus saw a potential neighbor in everyone He met. We might test our own neighborliness of spirit by asking ourselves the following questions:

Do we feel superior to any person or any race or any nation? Superiority is not a neighborly attitude. Don't let us fool ourselves—white people or Americans or college graduates are not necessarily better than other people.

This brings us to our second question: What does it mean to love our neighbors as ourselves? It means

that we shouldn't do things to others or say things about others that we wouldn't like to have done to us or said about us.

What are some of the things we do not like to have done to us, or said about us?

We do not like to be snubbed.

We do not like to be patronized.

We do not like to be misunderstood.

We do not like to be deceived.

We do not like to be used.

We do not like to be gossiped about.

We do not like to be dominated or dictated to.

We do not like to be hated.

We do not like to be unforgiven.

When we are in trouble we do not like to be passed by on the other side.

We demand so much of other people and so little of ourselves. As Robert Burns put it, "Oh, would some power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us." The best way to see ourselves and get true perspective on our reactions to people, is to look at Jesus and see how He reacted to people.

We do not like to be snubbed or patronized. One's inward reaction to being snubbed or patronized

always has been for him instinctively to draw himself up to his full height and give as good as he received. That was not Jesus' reaction. Jesus' mind and heart were so open toward all men that He sought to know the real reason for the snub or the patronizing attitude. Possibly it was caused by shyness or fear or a guilty conscience, or pride and self-complacency in the other fellow. Jesus always knew it was some sort of smoke screen, and He never let a mere hostile word or look deter Him from cutting through all such smoke screens straight to the real man.

We do not like to be misunderstood. Jesus was continually being misunderstood and misrepresented. He never reacted with personal pique and anger. When He was angry with men it was because they deliberately flouted God's will and God's laws, not His will and His ideas.

How different from our reactions. Recently I attempted to mediate between two people who were having a private war. My efforts were misunderstood, and I was accused by one in particular of taking the part of the other against her. My first reaction was one of burning anger, and I decided to repay such ingratitude by washing my hands of the whole affair. On second thought, it came to me that I wouldn't want her to treat me like that, and that if I attempted

to explain why I had said and done what I did she would understand, and it might open her eyes to the intransigency of her own attitude. So I went to her and she did understand and changed her attitude.

We do not like to be deceived or used. If we do not like to be deceived or used we must make sure that we do not deceive or use others. We must not pretend that we feel for them something we do not feel in order to get them to do something we want them to do. We call people who do such things to us "snakes in the grass," "smooth," "slippery," "insincere." Jesus never used people to further His own ends. He never deceived them about His motives. People trusted Him because He meant what He said, and because they instinctively knew that He was sincerely interested in them and not in what He could get out of them.

We do not like to be gossiped about. Gossip is one of the worst sins of Christians. How incensed we become when we hear that two other people have been discussing us to our discredit. Or that a supposed friend has been making false and insinuating remarks about us which are three-quarters untrue. Are we ourselves guiltless? It is so much easier to be honest behind another person's back than to his face. It requires so much less tact and so much less courage.

The war brought home to us the danger to human lives of the careless remark, the half-baked criticism.

Jesus had a great deal to say about the use of our tongues. He knew, as we should know, that gossip can destroy people's reputations as effectively as smear campaigns can destroy people's careers or as loose talk in war can destroy people's lives. Therefore, we need to pray that the words of our lips and the thoughts in our hearts be acceptable in His sight.

We do not like to be dominated. How we resent another person's effort to boss or dominate us. "What right have they to try to run our lives?" Have we never been guilty of trying to dominate anyone else? We hear a great deal these days about dictatorship and regimentation. Have we never tried to dictate to our children or to our employes? Have we never tried to dominate a friend or a fellow worker?

With all His power, Jesus never used power to dominate another soul. He offered His advice, He healed people's minds and bodies and souls. He redeemed, but He never dominated. He rested His case in the truth of His teaching and the influence of His life and death. If these took possession of a man, well and good. But He never forced. He gave, and men could choose to accept or reject His gift. He asks us to follow His example.

We do not like to be passed by on the other side. All of us get into trouble at some time in our lives. Sickness, accident, loss of money, family problems, and death beset everyone. At these times the people we appreciate most are those who take the trouble to stop and help us, who are not so preoccupied with their own affairs that they haven't the time to interest themselves in our troubles.

Jesus set us the truly great example in this sort of neighborliness. He was engaged in a mighty mission, and yet He had enough time and love to notice the hunger of the five thousand, the sorrow of the nobleman with the dying son, the plight of the blind men, and the desperation of the women taken in adultery. He was always turning aside to help someone out of trouble, and He expects us to do the same for each other.

We do not like to be unforgiven. In these days in which we live the world is bristling with hatred and unforgiveness. People hate each other, races hate each other, nations hate each other. The world was bristling with hatreds and unforgiveness in Jesus' day. Perhaps that is why Jesus laid so much emphasis on forgiveness. In the Lord's Prayer we are told to ask for forgiveness for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Jesus goes on to say

that "unless we forgive men their trespasses against us, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses." Forgiveness and love are two absolutely essential conditions of effective prayer.

Jesus carries it so far that He tells us, that if a man brings his gift to the altar and there remembers that his brother has ought against him, he should leave his gift, and first be reconciled with his brother and then come and offer his gift.

While I was trying to write this chapter I was stopped in my tracks by the sure knowledge that a member of my household had something against me; it was written all over her face and her manner. I felt uncomfortable and resentful. We had been in the habit of praying together in the evening. That night our prayers were as unreal as King Claudius in *Hamlet* when he said, "My words go up, my thoughts remain below; words without thoughts never to heaven go."

The unspoken unfriendly thoughts between us had caused a short circuit in our prayers and broken our unity. We talked very late that night, and we talked very honestly. We got down to the reasons that had caused her to resent me. She asked to be forgiven for her resentment, and I asked to be forgiven for the things I had said and done to cause her resentment. Then and then only could we "bring our gift to the

altar," pick up our prayer and lay it before God with reality and power.

This, I think, will help us to realize that we cannot pray with any power whatever if we hold hatred or unforgiveness in our hearts for any person or any group of people or any nation or any race. This is a hard saying, but it is a basic law of prayer. I do not mean by this that we should be sentimental and mushy about people or nations who have sold out to evil ideas and methods. The "forgive and forget" attitude is apt to spring from an unwillingness to face the fact of evil in the world and an inability in ourselves to judge between good or bad.

Jesus did not condemn men or condone them, He challenged them and let them judge themselves by the way in which they responded to His challenge. Then he interceded for them. He is asking the same of us. He is asking us to hold such an attitude toward those who have sinned against us that we intercede for them, in the faith and expectation that God will show us how to temper justice with understanding; and if we must punish or resist, how to punish or resist, in a spirit of justice, with the hope that the punishment will redeem and restore, not merely break and destroy.

There is one final moral warning that Jesus leaves

us in this matter of loving our neighbor as a prelude to effective prayer.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

It is Jesus' great condemnation of self-righteousness, the besetting sin of good people and victorious nations. Jesus does not say, "Condone evil, overlook evil." He says, "As you experience evil in another person or group of people or nation, don't forget that being human, you yourself fall far short as well; you need to be forgiven and redeemed as well as your enemy."

In effect, Jesus is saying to us, "Your job with yourself is as important as your job with the other fellow. Get yourself straight in all your attitudes and actions and words in relation to your neighbor and to other individuals and groups and nations. Then you can't help praying for him and them in the right

way, in the kind of way that will carry your prayer straight up before the throne of God."

Possibly you feel that I have labored this question of preparation for effective prayer. I have only recapitulated our Lord's own teaching and the experience of those who have prayed effectively since He first taught us to pray. We live in an impatient age, an age in which we demand short cuts to practically everything. Unfortunately, there are no short cuts to power in prayer, because the world has become the parish of anyone who prays sincerely and we cannot affect our world unless we cultivate the mind of Christ and seek to appropriate His ways. It took the most minute and exhaustive planning and training to win the war. It is no less important to prepare ourselves as carefully and conscientiously to win the battle for peace, for our warfare is the age-old warfare between good and evil, between God and sin in this world.

V

RESULTS

Peace to Our Minds, Rest to Our Bodies, Strength to Our Souls.

We are now ready to add up some of the results of dynamic prayer. If prayer is governed by rules and laws, then, like scientists, we adopt a hypothesis and make an experiment in order to discover by what laws it is governed, and tabulate the results.

What are the results of prayer on ourselves—on our minds and souls and bodies? It is possible that we are just beginning to plumb the possibilities in prayer, as we are just beginning to discover the wonder-working power of certain medicines and the miraculous energies contained in the atom.

Apparently the extraordinary power of atomic energy lies in its explosive power and radio-active effects. Once released, the atom explodes and explodes and explodes and affects with radio-activity everything within its reach. So with spiritual energy:

once released by prayer it explodes and explodes and explodes, affecting beneficently every object at which it is directed.

A recent best seller, which is being read by millions of Americans, is *Peace of Mind*. It is a brilliant book whose wide circulation indicates a desperate hunger among Americans for the very thing the title describes. I cannot overstate what the habit of prayer contributes to peace of mind. There are so many things these days to worry us. We have heavy family and business responsibilities. We cannot find the right home to live in, or the right job to work at. So many people are filled with anxiety about the state of the nation and the world. We feel we know what should be done but don't know how to go about doing it. We are confused by the endless pressures to which we are continuously subjected—the need for more money, more opportunity for our children; the advice of well-meaning but misguided friends; the clamor of headlines, commentators, political propagandists.

Then there are the often inescapable pressures of events—war, sickness, sorrow, family crisis.

It would seem that only super men and women could meet all these onslaughts with equanimity, and yet millions of men and women seem to have gained a peace of mind that gives them wisdom, serenity, and courage in the midst of whirling events. They

have a secret strength. They are the living result of dynamic prayer.

As I write these words I think of Raymond. Raymond was from Maine. He was twenty-one; he had auburn hair and blue eyes and a gay infectious laugh. Everyone loved him. His family had never had much of this world's goods, but they had something much more valuable. They had a deep, rich faith in God and a loving united home. In January, 1945, Raymond's Marine division sailed through the Golden Gate bound for Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Before he sailed, Raymond wrote the following letter to his mother.

Late Afternoon, January 7, 1945.

P.S.

Mother dearest,

As I lie here on my bunk, wondering about things, I felt led to put a few of these innermost thoughts on paper and transmit them to you, dearest. I pray that I do not err in doing so.

Should anything happen to me in the future, I pray for time not to be in Heaven so that I may see you soon, darling. I can hardly bear the thoughts of leaving you, Mom dear, or any of my loved ones, but should I have to it is comforting to know I'm safe in the arms of Jesus, always, and am ready to go—whatever God's will may be for me. This fact, that I shall face death itself, should bring all of us to the realization of whether or not *we are ready*.

I love each of you so dearly and want you all to be with me in Eternity, our beautiful Home beyond the sunrise. Surely you all love me enough to prepare yourselves to come to our Home together—that you may see me again if God calls me Home. Only we ourselves can answer the question, Are we ready? My sincere prayer is that we shall all search our souls and hearts and talk this important question over with God and satisfy ourselves.

I pray that my life shall have been a blessing to others while I lived and that my shortcomings will be forgiven.

You have all been a loving sweet family. I could not tell you each how very much I love you and why, for there are no words for it. But I cherish you all: Mother, Dad, sister, brother and little nephew. My life is devoted to you all, and I shall be glad to say I am willing to die for you should that be my calling. You are worthy of it. Bless you, dears. May God draw us closer together in spirit and may He hold us close in the hollow of His hand and speak peace to our hearts in the days and years to come.

Trusting I will see you in our earthly home, or, if God so wills, *our* Home in Eternity.

All my love, all my life to my little family.

Ray

My kiss

The letter requires no comment. Raymond had fearlessly faced the possibility of death, and through prayer had been given this rich reassurance and peace of mind, so that for him we can imagine that death held no terrors. His mother misses him sorely, but she too is content because she has experienced the

truth of the beautiful closing words of his letter, "May God draw us closer together in spirit and may He hold us in the hollow of His hand and speak peace to our hearts in the days and years to come."

I was having tea with Marie before a cosy, crackling fire in her big comfortable old-fashioned living-room. She was knitting, and we were enthusiastically talking of all kinds of people and projects in which we were mutually interested. Marie was always so quiet and serene. Nothing in her look or manner betrayed the fact that she knew she was dying of cancer. She was in constant pain, and the doctor had given her a year to live.

Her friends and relatives prayed for her continually, for healing, if it was God's will, for peace, for freedom from fear, for a continued sense of her Lord's presence. The first prayer He did not grant. She was not healed. The others were granted in abundant measure. In a letter she wrote to me before her death she told how completely she had been freed from fear, and closed with the following poignant sentence: "I have one great assurance, that underneath are the everlasting arms and that no matter what happens they will always be there." In answer to prayer God gave Marie "peace of mind," and she faced pain and death with courage and confidence.

I shall tell the following story in Janet's own

words. Janet has been through deep waters, and she has found not only peace of mind but a sure sense of direction for her whole life.

"In a world torn by tragedy of every kind, nothing is more important to men and women than peace of mind. Having found the answer through the love of Christ, I find it a joy to tell others how it came.

"For years I suffered from insomnia, due to trouble and sorrows which began with the illness and death of my mother when I was a child. I had loved her deeply, and it was a real grief. Many wonderful relationships came along, which I lost through death and separation. Finally there came one which was perfect, but it became clear to me that to keep it meant going against the will of God and hurting other people. After many heartbreaking months, I eventually made the right decision, but it taught me the real meaning of the cross.

"During this time the insomnia had grown steadily worse, and I finally resorted to taking pheno-barbital at night to relieve the torture for a few short hours. My grief was so unbearable that I almost gasped for breath, and felt that surely I would smother. Then one day a Christian friend to whom I expressed this fear said lovingly, 'Go ahead and smother and you will be free.' In an instant I understood. I had been hugging a mortal wound from which I did not really

want to be healed. We often continue to carry our crosses because we cling to them, when God would have us move on to the resurrection.

"With my shaky, wavering faith I threw myself, my shattered nerves and my sins on the mercy of God, hardly knowing how I did it. Instead of my own negative feelings, I began to repeat His positive phrases of love, and gradually they dropped into my subconscious, until, now, immediately upon awakening, I find myself saying, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation.' The established habit of saying over and over any of the verses telling of Christ's love are of unspeakable value in healing a distracted mind, because they shift our eyes from ourselves and our weakness to Him and His strength.

"In a short time I was delighted to find my insomnia gone. I have spent, and continue to spend, hours alone with Him, because only in that way can we come to know Him face to face. In amazing ways He has revealed His love. I marvel to see how He took me as I was and began to remake me. Whatever the future might bring, there is nothing to fear, because I am anchored in Him.

"My work had been in the arts, and during the long period of despair it went to pieces, and I was completely unable to concentrate. Slowly but surely it has come back and taken on new meaning as I have

given God every area of my life. He is working out His plan for me in a wonderful way, and in His infinite wisdom is using even those long months which were seemingly lost.

"It is only necessary to put ourselves in His light and give Him our all. He 'who telleth the number of the stars' has the power to transform our minds from conflict to calm. As we come to know what He really meant when He asked us to abide in Him, we know from the heart that if God be for us, truly no one can be against us, and we come to hear Jesus say, as He did to His disciples, 'Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.'"

So you see, peace of mind is not only possible but the thing God wants for all of us, no matter what our circumstances or the pressures upon us. It is there for all of us if we really want it and have the will to lay hold of it.

How does prayer affect our bodies? It should rest us, relax us, release us, renew us, and heal us.

If we would take the advice of the Greek philosopher, "Man should make a temple of his bed," we would spend fewer wakeful nights. Many a time when I've started to lie awake, I've turned to prayer and by putting into God's hands everything that was on my mind, soon found myself drifting off to sleep.

Many a time when I've been dead tired I've joined a group for prayer and so forgotten myself that at the end I've been amazed to find myself rested and relaxed.

Prayer is like spiritual vitamins. Nothing takes a greater toll of our bodies than worry, strain, and fear, which first eat out our hearts and then *waste* our *bodies*. Prayer releases us from these enemies of mental and physical health.

The following experience was told us by a remarkable Dutch woman, who, with her sister and other relatives, was arrested by the Nazi Gestapo and sent to a German concentration camp because of underground activities which they and other Christians were carrying on in Holland. Because of her shining faith and courage this woman, Carrie Ten Boom, was used to bring faith and courage, and even healing, to many other women in the concentration camp. But let her tell this story in her own words. She calls it "Prayer Opens a Window":

"One day we heard that, in barrack 8, a young woman had lost courage. This means that, the body will give out soon also. So we tried to help her, but entrance to this barrack for the sick was forbidden. We prayed together with some others, somewhere in a corner, and then I went to the barrack. I knew the window behind which she was lying but the shutters

were closed. So I went back and again we prayed together: 'O Lord, grant that the shutter be opened.' A member of the camp police passed the barrack and opened the shutter. Again I went to the window, but there was a new difficulty; the window was closed from within. Again we prayed that the window might be opened. Before I was back, a Polish woman had already opened the window, and I began to speak: 'Willy, can you hear me?' 'Oh, yes! How wonderful that you are there. I feel so depressed and I have such a pain and everything is so dreary.'

"At this moment I was hit by a guard. 'Move on,' she cried. I went back to the others and we prayed: 'O Lord, grant that the guards keep away from me and give me words of comfort for Willy.' I was standing at some distance from the window. The guards had gone. 'Willy, remember that the Lord Jesus loves you. When you are in pain, you must think of His sorrows, His sufferings for your sins to show you the way to Heaven. The sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the Coming Glory. When you seize the Saviour's hands, He will hold you and help you through everything and so this tribulation will work out an eternal weight of glory.'

"I went on talking like this till Willy cried: 'I see it again. It is so true. Now I have courage again. You have really comforted me, I thank you.'

"Then the guard hit me again; she closed the window and the shutter, and we could talk no longer, but I knew that Christ had conquered again. We rendered thanks together in the corner between the barracks in front of the barbed wire, because the Evil One had not won."

A birth injury nearly twenty-eight years ago destined Jim to be the victim of spastic paralysis. After twenty-two years with his legs contracted into a sitting position, surgery succeeded in lengthening the leg muscles, enabling him to stand on nearly straight legs. With the support of leg braces, he began to enjoy a new measure of freedom; but, ironically enough, this new freedom brought new abdominal muscles into action which proved both spastic and painful. Much of the pain, which is his constant companion, is caused by adhesions in his spinal column and the resulting nerve pressure. He walks with the aid of leg braces, a back support and two canes—a process that is both cumbersome and painful. He stands beyond the pale of any further medical help. And yet listen to Jim's soaring faith in ultimate healing:

"To give oneself so completely to God that one becomes a perfect channel for the love of God to flow through, and to feel the thrill of that God-flow is worth going through hell for. That the healing power

in that flow is only incidental to the love God expresses for others through me, of this I am thoroughly convinced, too; but that there is healing power in such an outpouring of love, both for the one who loves and the one who is loved—this fact cannot be taken lightly. In this, it now seems to me, is the acid test of how powerful and free the flow of the Spirit is.

“If it were not for the fact that I am convinced that God can heal when I am completely His, I would believe that I had already achieved the completeness of prayer, for there are times when my mind and heart fairly burst with content of the Spirit within me. Healing is incidental, but when I am not being healed it is an indication that the Spirit is not as powerful within me as I think it is.

“My mission in life is to proclaim the Christ of the Cross as a necessary factor in real living; but, more than that, to proclaim the Christ of the empty tomb, the Christ beyond pain and suffering, as entirely possible and obtainable. Crucifixion is essential to resurrection, but the glory of God is not in the crucifixion but in the final purpose of crucifixion—resurrection.

“I’ve been over that long trail and I know I can be driven to God out of sheer desperation and utter helplessness and receive Him gloriously, without any circumstances having changed; but it is God’s pur-

pose to draw us to Him with love, as He draws the flower into bloom. If we must suffer and be driven, let us not blame the suffering on 'God's will.' To have one's body become the dwelling place of Christ is, as Casaday says, the most wonderful thing in the world. The question I ask is: Will God be content to dwell in an imperfect body; or, when God enters fully, will perfection be automatic and complete? I am devoting my life to proving that the latter proposition is true."

You see, Jim lives in the spirit of Easter, the spirit of expectant prayer.

Many have experienced the amazing peace and sense of renewal that comes when, too ill to pray ourselves, we have dared to trust to the prayers of our friends for us.

A year or so ago I had to undergo an operation under a local anesthetic. I asked a group of my friends to pray for me, and I went into the operating room literally buoyed up by their prayers. I felt no fear, no pain, and had none of the usual bad after-effects, but a rather joyous sense that God was "at hand."

Recently a friend of mine became dangerously ill. I wrote her immediately and told her that a group of us were praying, and just to rest in our prayers. Later she sent me a card saying that she turned the

corner on receipt of my note and knew that she was getting well from that moment on.

One night my husband and I were called by long distance telephone to be told by the husband of another friend that she had had a serious accident and was at death's door. As soon as we were able, we went to that city to see her, hoping against hope that the husband in his anxiety had exaggerated. But when we tiptoed into the hospital room of our friend she looked so ethereal lying there in the oxygen tent that it frightened me. Have you ever seen people very close to death? They don't look like themselves. An other-world look has already crept into their eyes, as though the soul and the intelligence had started off on a long journey. If my friend had been ready I would not have felt so distressed, but I knew that she was afraid and in great distress of mind. That was evident, too, in the haunted, pinched little face and the withdrawn, frightened eyes. My husband quietly took her hand in his, and as I stood at the foot of the bed, he prayed for peace, for rest, for the comforting sense that God was near, that He loved her, and that nothing might separate her from this sense of His abiding love. She pressed his hand feebly, and the nurse beckoned us to come away.

We felt such urgency that we prayed all the way

home in the car and during that entire evening. It was literally a case of prayer without ceasing.

We did not pray that God would heal her. We prayed that she might have peace of mind and heart, that she would be released from whatever she feared, from whatever distressed her. We prayed that she would know the deep inward sense of unity with God that came to Jesus that night in the garden. Suddenly I had an overwhelming assurance that all was well. I turned to my husband and commented on it. He had felt the same—the deep comforting conviction that we need not strive any more, for God Himself had reached down and touched her.

When we went to the hospital the next day, we saw at a glance that she had come back. She was still very weak, and as she took my hand she whispered, "Oh, Helen, yesterday I was so sick and I was so afraid—but it's all right now." I said, "When did you begin to feel better?" She replied, "At about ten o'clock last night." That was the very hour when we had received our great sense of assurance.

Later, when she was fully recovered, she told me as she lay there foundering in wave after wave of the wretched confusion of sensations that come over one with acute illness, it was as though a powerful stream of clear water suddenly had swept through her, and where there had been fear and pain and

darkness there was light and peace and a deep calm sense of the divine presence—peace to her mind, rest, and healing to her body.

There are many who feel that spiritual force is the greatest force in the world, that it is more powerful than force of arms, or force of words, or force of ideas. It is the great dynamo behind most of the sound ideas and sound actions which have marked the moral and social progress of mankind.

Jesus believed mightily in spiritual force. He had no weapons other than the force of His own God-infused personality. He allowed no other weapons to His immediate followers. They were to go out in the spirit of the Lord and in the power of His might.

The source of spiritual force lies in our emotions. It has become the style for modern intellectuals to distrust and discredit the place of emotion in life. It is true that undisciplined, misdirected emotions can be very dangerous, but the same God who gave us our emotions also gave us the power to direct them creatively. It is no accident that body, mind, and spirit are the three elements that make up human personality.

As we learn to pray, the power of God over our spirits is increased in direct proportion to the selflessness and purity of our prayers. If, as we are told, God wants to clothe us with all of the attributes of a

son of God, He puts at our disposal not only clarity of mind, not only renewal of body, but also strength of spirit.

There is not one of us who does not know some one who has that elusive quality that gives the people around him or her a sense of security, of confidence—a person who seems to radiate strength of spirit.

She was just a little war bride, one of millions, lying in the hospital of an Eastern city. Three days before she had given birth to a beautiful little girl. Her husband had not been with her. He was waiting in a West Coast city for final orders to sail for a Pacific war theater. Word had just come that he had sailed, without seeing his first-born child. It was hard, but she was prepared for it. She was not, however, prepared for what happened next. The door opened, and the girl's father came into the room. He walked slowly to the foot of the bed. He had to break another piece of news to her that was overwhelming, and in a shaking voice he told her the doctor had just informed him that the tiny daughter had to have a most serious operation and had no chance to live otherwise. Even then her chances were very slight. The young mother took her father's hand quietly in hers. "Daddy," she said, "don't grieve. My husband and my baby are in God's hands and I trust God com-

pletely." The baby was operated on successfully. The surgeon who performed the operation told the young mother he knew that it was a power outside of himself that guided his hand throughout the operation. The baby's doctor, anxious that the little one should have her own mother's milk, was astounded to discover that the mother lost not a single drop of it. He concluded that her extraordinary serenity, which he had thought was just a stiff upper lip, was in reality a deep peace and strength of spirit that could come only from the strength and completeness of her trust in God. She never wavered in that trust. Was it, perhaps, one of God's exquisite gifts, like Easter after Good Friday, that her little one was restored to perfect health and her husband came home safe? But more important even than this were the courage and inspiration with which she infected her doctors and family and friends.

I was talking to Bruce of the aircraft carrier in the Naval Hospital one day. He had just received a letter from the mother of his best friend, who had died in his arms, killed by machine-gun bullets from a Jap plane while directing the fire of their gun crew. The letter was the letter of an obviously praying mother, and I asked my friend about the boy who had died. His eyes kindled. "He was the finest fellow I ever knew," he replied. "He always seemed to know

just what you were thinking. I'm kind of hot-headed and he certainly kept me steady a lot of times. I used to get all prickly and jumpy when they called 'general quarters' and he'd put his hand on my arm and say, 'what's the hurry, Buck? We'll do just as well if we don't arrive all out of breath.' Then when we got up there and he was getting the range, he'd look down at us and laugh. 'Take it easy, boys,' he'd say. 'Keep your shirts on; we're more likely to hit the target and save ammunition if we don't try to shoot up the whole darned sky!'

"When he was hit and I was holding him, I said, 'I'm going to holler for a medic,' and he wouldn't let me. 'The medics can't help me, Bruce; don't take them away from the boys they can help.' Then he looked up with the most wonderful expression on his face, and in a few minutes he was gone. My, we missed him—he kind of kept us all steady. I don't know what it was. He didn't ever talk about prayer or God or anything, but he seemed to be the kind of guy that could keep everybody else steady because he was so steady himself, and it was always that way from boot camp up. We had a wonderful spirit on our combat team, mainly because of him. I want to be like him more than anyone else I've ever known."

One day I read a headline in *The New York Times*. It was dated April 10, 1947. It read: "Padre Stayed

on Ship to Die with His 'Boys.' " I read on, and my heart leaped in recognition and salutation, for it was about an old and dear friend of my husband's and mine. We knew that he had been killed in the war but had never heard the full details. The article read as follows:

"He could have saved himself. Survivors held a crowded lifeboat for the Rev. Herbert Cecil Pugh at the risk of being sucked down in the death plunge of the torpedoed British troop transport *Anselm*, the deck of which was already awash. He resisted their pleading that he might fulfil to the end the duty entrusted to him as a Royal Air Force chaplain and his mission as a soldier of God.

"The Rev. Mr. Pugh, as the vessel slowly foundered, had been doing his best to help lower lifeboats and rafts, comfort the wounded, moaning and writhing in their pain, and getting men out of the lower sections where the troops were quartered. Then he learned that several injured airmen were trapped in a hold the torpedo had wrecked. It was filling rapidly as the sea widened a leak.

" 'They are my boys; I must go to them,' he said simply, disregarding the remonstrances of crew members who urged him to jump for the lifeboat before it was too late. So they lowered him by a rope into the hold and the last they saw of the padre he was

kneeling in prayer with the water up to his shoulders. And of a certainty he included with his dying comrades in his invocation, his wife and three children he had left behind in England, where before he joined the RAF he was pastor of the Congregational Church at Friern Barnet, Middlesex.

"The *Anselm* with 1,300 passengers was sunk while on her way to West Africa in June, 1941. Recently the George Cross was awarded to the chaplain with the approval of the King."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Cecil understood the way of the Cross, and he dared to follow His master to the end of that way.

I am not describing supermen. I am describing ordinary, healthy, happy young men and women with a *plus*—the plus that comes from knowing and loving Christ in all His manliness and in all His power, the plus that comes from living prayerfully. People like this do not need to talk much, because they are living examples of what every one wants to be at his best. When they do talk, their friends listen because they speak with authority. They have spiritual strength because their supreme loyalty is centered in another person, the person of Christ, and they have become reflections of Him as He was a reflection of His Father.

One day a friend of mine went to call on Prebendary Carlisle, then a very old man, the remarkable founder of the Church Army, that gallant head of young men and women mobilized to carry on within the church the kind of work that the Salvation Army carries on so magnificently alongside the church.

My friend found the old man in bed in a bare little attic room with no ornament except a very beautiful head of Christ hanging over the bed. After some conversation, my friend said, "But, Prebendary Carlisle, do you get out of bed in this cold room at your age to say your prayers?" "I don't have to," replied the Prebendary, his keen blue eyes twinkling, "You see," looking tenderly up at the portrait, "it's an old love story between Him and me."

"It's an old love story between Him and Me"—and out of that secret friendship flows peace to our minds, rest to our bodies, and strength to our souls.

VI

GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS FOR OUR FRIENDS

Some modern interpreters of religion would have us believe that prayer is like magic. They tell us that by the wave of a wand the poor suddenly will become rich, the bad people good, and sick people well. When this doesn't happen immediately, many people taken in by this shallow interpretation turn from prayer with the remark, "I don't believe in prayer any more. God has never answered my prayers!" Most of us have felt this way at times. We are so impatient, we are so demanding, we must see the kind of results that our immature, finite minds can grasp and tabulate. When we do not succeed in bending God to our will we all too often turn away in discouragement and unbelief.

As the Psalmist reminds us, God's ways are not like our ways. God has a wider view of every situation than we have, and many prayers that seem to be unanswered really are being answered all the time.

We do not recognize the answers, because our view of life is small and short-range, while God's is great and long-range.

Surely Jesus meant that He should be taken literally when in His great teaching on prayer He asks ironically, "If ye ask for a loaf, will he give you a stone?" and then goes on to say, "Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened, seek and ye shall find. Whatsoever ye ask for in *my* name believing, ye shall receive!" The same Jesus who warned us against "vain repetitions," and who told us the Father knew what we had need of before we asked Him, also enjoins us to storm the gates of heaven with our prayers. I cannot help but feel that Jesus in telling us here in His own perfect language to tap freely the inexhaustible spiritual energy in the Godhead that is waiting to be released to humanity's infinite benefit. So, when answers seem long in coming, be patient and keep on praying, for the answer will come in God's way and in His time.

I have already given many illustrations of answered prayer, but it may help to re-enforce your faith, if I describe certain specific ways in which God answers us. First, there is direct prayer for people in distress or in need of one kind or another—the people who have asked for our prayers, and who know we are praying for them. Then there is what I

shall call indirect prayer, prayer for people who do not know we are praying for them. Lastly, there is the form of indirect prayer that can and often does affect great world issues, and changes the course of history.

Some time ago three men were talking together in a room in Canada. One was a minister, one was a cured drug addict, and the third was a confirmed alcoholic. The minister and the cured drug addict had used every persuasive argument they could think of to turn the alcoholic from his suicidal course.

Suddenly he got up desperately and announced that it was no use. "All right," replied the minister quietly, "we won't stop you, you're a free man. Go and do whatever you think best. Al and I will be praying for you." Whereupon he and Al got down on their knees. The alcoholic started defiantly for the door, but he had to climb over their legs to get there, and it was too much. He collapsed. It was the beginning of a new beginning in the life of this man. He has said frequently since, "How could I walk out on two men who cared enough to pray that way for me?" As you see, the very directness of this prayer carried a very direct influence.

It was a dark hour for Norway when the Nazis took over. Bishop Berggrav, the staunch old Primate of the Norwegian Lutheran church, along with all the other influential leaders who defied the Nazi ideology

and directed the Norwegian resistance, were hauled off to concentration camps. I have been told since that in thousands of homes in Norway prayer went up for Bishop Bergraev, for his life if God would grant it, but, above all, that he might be given wisdom and courage and inspiration for his people in his imprisonment. The Nazis were so afraid of his influence that they removed him to solitary confinement. But they found that they had to change his six SS. guards every two weeks because he converted them as fast as they were detailed to guard him. He emerged from prison a triumphant example of how God vindicates and uses His own, and has become one of the Great Christian leaders of Europe. In this instance, the concentrated prayers of his fellow countrymen drew down God's grace into the bishop's life in such abundant measure that he came to epitomize the very soul of Norway.

The chaplain was very troubled. He had come to see a young Negro woman who had attended one of his chapel services. He didn't find her as he entered the ward and asked one of the attendants to bring her to him. She was one of many who had attended his services, but he had noticed her particularly. She was more alert and responsive than most of the others. But when the attendant brought her in he was greatly shocked. She had obviously suffered a relapse. She

was a tragic bundle of despair, hair disheveled, eyes blank, and face expressionless. The chaplain went quietly over and took her hand. It lay inertly in his. "Maggie," he said quietly, "look at me." It must have been the kindness in his tone that reached through into her sick mind. She looked up dully. "Maggie," he said again, "were you brought up in the church?" She nodded dully. "Then you will understand that whatever it is that is making you so sick, God loves you, and He wants you to get well. Can't you tell me what is the matter?" Suddenly Maggie broke into a long shuddering wail. "I killed my children! I killed my children!" she moaned. "God hates me! I'm lost! I'm lost!" By degrees the whole sordid tragic tale poured out—ignorance, poverty, sex, and abortions. When she had finished, he asked her to kneel down with him and ask forgiveness. They knelt together on the cold stone floor of the ward, while she brokenly asked for forgiveness and received absolution. The chaplain left her then to see some other patients, and, later, as he was leaving the ward, there was Maggie, washed and freshly dressed standing in the door of her cubicle, smiling and waving to him. Outside the ward the attendant met the chaplain with amazement written all over her face. "Whatever did you do to Maggie?" she asked. "The depression is gone, her mind is clear. Why, it's

as if a devil had gone out of her." "It has," replied the chaplain quietly, "a devil of guilt." The reality and power of the chaplain's prayer had succeeded in focusing the light of God's mercy on the disordered mind, until the black shadows which had taken possession were swept clean out and the girl was healed. Inexplicable from a scientific point of view, but not at all unusual to those who from continual experience know how God replies to our prayers.

The above are illustrations of the way in which God answers our prayers for those who know of them. Can it work in the lives of people as effectively if they do not know they are being prayed for? The answer is a thousand times yes.

The beautiful and delicate way in which God brings different elements and people and circumstances into play to accomplish His purposes in answer to prayer never ceases to enthrall me. It is so like the weaving of an exquisite tapestry, a thread here, a color there, and the divine shuttle weaving tirelessly in and out, until the design is perfected and finished.

She was beautiful. She was young, and she was well-to-do. She had been healthy until at the age of eighteen she had fallen victim to polio. She had not been badly crippled, but her whole young life had been centered in sports, and it had not been easy to

give them up. When her mother died, some time after her illness, she decided to take a trip around the world to prove to herself and her relatives that she was quite capable of taking care of herself in spite of a handicap. On her way back she went to Sweden, where she met a very remarkable Swedish woman doctor who specialized in massage and muscular reconditioning, and she planned to spend her summer helping her new-found friend to help other polio victims.

She then went to London to see some friends, when the accident happened which she feels led her into one of the most interesting and wonderful adventures of her life. While she was walking on a wet sidewalk one afternoon, her foot slipped and she broke a knee. The next thing she knew she was lying in bed in a London hospital. At first, she was rather rebellious that all her fine plans for useful summer work seemed to have been shattered so quickly. Then she began to pray to be shown why this accident had happened. She had been placed in a ward with a number of young polio patients, with whom she began to make friends. Then, in a flash, she realized that this was the answer to her prayers. She had been so deeply grateful for the love and the care that had been given her when she was recovering from polio herself that ever since she had sought an opportunity to give the same love

and care to someone else. That is why she had made such grand plans for the summer in Sweden. Well, perhaps that plan would work out after all, only in a rather different fashion from the one which she had first visualized. Here in the hospital with her were many boys and girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five lying helplessly paralyzed, many of them unable even to sit up. No one seemed to know what to do for them. Those were the days before people had discovered how to restore a person crippled with polio to a life of usefulness and self-support. These young people were from average well-to-do families, but their parents seemed to be without either the imagination or the will to take helpless cripples back into the household, so they had been left in the hospital as the only solution. Leonora made friends with these young people. She began to long with every fiber of her being to do something to bring them back into the main stream of life. She prayed with all her heart that God would show her what to do, and slowly a plan began to take form in her mind. Before she left the hospital the plan had matured fully. First, she talked to the young people themselves about the possibility of a life of happiness and normality in spite of their handicap. She says that she had a hard time persuading some of them that they could ever make a go of it outside of the hospital. Next, she got in touch with

their parents. They came to the hospital to see her, and she had another battle on her hands persuading the parents that her plan for the reconditioning of these young people would prove successful if only they would invest in the experiment. Third, she had to overcome the resistance of one or two of the hospital doctors. Fourth, she got in touch with her friend the Swedish doctor, and had her come to London to see her and the boys and girls and make arrangements with her to take a house in a little country town in Sweden and persuade the young people's parents that it was quite safe to transport them by plane and boat to this place for the summer.

By a miracle all the resistance dissolved, and twelve boys and girls, two of them on stretchers, left that hospital for the new adventure in Sweden. Because of the wonderful medical care of the wise Swedish doctor and the loving interest of Leonora, all twelve were up, by the end of the summer, most of them walking on crutches, but all of them able to run Leonora's car with special appliances. These boys and girls returned to England at the end of the summer, some to finish their education, some to get jobs. Nearly all of them have since married and established their own homes.

As I was writing this story my friend Leonora told me that she had just received a letter from a young

Merchant Marine officer, one of the twelve who had been so far restored to health that he had been able to return home, get a job, marry, and raise a family. He gave her little bits of news about all the other twelve, and closed his letter by saying that all of them could never thank God often enough for her inspiration to give them the opportunity to lead a normal life. And this is fifteen years after it all happened.

You see, this young woman wondered why and prayed to be shown, and God answered her by directing her prayers to those unfortunate youngsters, who did not even know that she was praying for them. From there, He showed her how to mobilize her experience, her imagination, and her resources to help them.

Another story came to me from the head nurse in a children's ward in a great city hospital. I shall use her own words:

"Sorry that I cannot talk publicly of these things, but I want you to know that Christ heals today the same as He did when He was on earth.

"Last December a little boy a year and a half old was brought to me with his legs so badly injured that we thought they would drop off. A young student nurse asked if she could wash him and make him comfortable. I said she could. As she worked with the

baby I felt that she was praying, and I too offered up a prayer for both of them.

"Several doctors looked at the child and said that his legs could not be saved. They did not reckon with God and the young student nurse. She said, 'This is not baby's fault. God did not intend him to lose his legs nor his life.' Every student nurse who had the care of the child after that felt the same way, and all loved the baby dearly and cared for him prayerfully. The doctors were amazed at his progress and recovery, and today he is running around happily on his own two feet."

Last spring one of my friends, a vivid young Christian who believes deeply in prayer, came to me very troubled about a friend with whom she was living. This friend was a very fine girl, with a distinguished war record in Red Cross hospital work overseas. She seemed to my young friend to be carrying a heavy secret heartache, which made it very difficult to get close to her. My young friend longed to help her; she wanted to tell her how much faith in God meant to her, and how it had helped her to face and deal with and find the solution to her own problems. Harry Emerson Fosdick tells us that people are like islands—"We must row around and around them until we find a place to land." We began to pray together for our Red Cross friend, and quite unexpectedly she

asked to come to an informal discussion group in "every-day faith" which we held in our home. It was fascinating to watch her during the evening. The tight withdrawn look crept out of her eyes and I could tell at the end of the evening that whatever it was on her heart, she didn't feel hopeless about it any more. There were many evenings after that—my young friend and I never talked with her about herself, as she did not invite it—but we knew that our prayers had landed on the island of her inmost self even if we had not. Four months later I received a telephone call from this girl, asking if she might see me and telling me that she had had an astounding experience for which she sought an interpretation. We made a date and she came to me with this story.

"I came here last week to the mid-week Holy Communion service and afterwards I remained in the church to pray. As I prayed it was as if someone took possession of my mind and an inner voice began to prompt me with words like these 'What about this?' in regard to a relationship that had been wrong, and 'What about this?' in regard to a resentful attitude that I had held, and, finally, 'What about this?' in regard to the hidden fundamental heartbreak which has frustrated my whole life. As I faced squarely into each of these questions and decided to come to grips with them and deal with them in the Christian way,

no matter what it cost me in pride, I suddenly began to feel a great freedom and a deep sense of security. I went home and wrote some letters which I never would have contemplated writing—I saw some people that I never would have seen. It's been very painful, but I begin to understand what that phrase in the Bible means, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,' because that afternoon I was really shown the truth about myself, and I was shown what to do to get my life back onto a sound foundation. What was it, who was it in the church, Mrs. Shoemaker? Does God really guide us like that, when we pray as personally as that, I mean?"

I went and fetched the New Testament and read her the wonderful story of the conversion of St. Paul. Then I told her how her friend and I had been praying for her, praying that God would come to her and lift off her shoulders the burden she had been carrying. Her eyes sparkled with tears. "Thank you," she said simply. "Now I understand, I feel as though I'd been let out of jail, where I've been barred in by my own unhappiness and not knowing what to do to get out."

In these four cases, none of these people knew he or she was being prayed for, and yet the leaven of God's love when drawn down into the situation by people who cared enough to pray made the impossible

possible. In the first three stories I have told, those who felt impelled to pray were also impelled to take an active part in the redemptive process. In the case of the Red Cross girl those who prayed were purely indirect instruments, used by God to open her mind and heart to Him.

VII

GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD

In other chapters I have mentioned some of the urgent world matters that need, above all things, to have great shafts of God's energies trained upon them.

It is perhaps dangerous to state dogmatically that God answers prayer on a global scale, that He changes the minds of world leaders when we little people pray, that He prevents dangerous international misunderstandings from becoming explosive collisions. We do know that He gives to His own loyal followers an endurance and power extraordinary when there is need, that He watches over His church, and that in spite of persecution, fire and sword, His laws and His way constantly gain ground in the hearts of men. It is to this last great fact that I wish to call your attention, because it is here that our prayers seem to be most strikingly and richly granted. It is still true that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Not nearly so many Christians were martyred in the days

of ancient Rome as are being martyred today. We do not know how many heroic Christians lost their lives in Germany, Holland, Norway, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, Japan, and China in resisting the Nazi and Japanese tyrannies. We do not know how many millions of Christians have been tortured, killed, or sent to slave-labor battalions in Russia and are now in the Russian-occupied countries behind the iron curtain, where before the Russian occupation there were 80,000,000 Christians. What we do know is that this persecution has put the Christians on their mettle to give an account of the faith that is in them, and that they are witnessing to that faith with a heroism that defies description.

In his sermon on his enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942, the late Archbishop Temple made this remarkable statement:

"As though in preparation for such a time as this, God has been building up a Christian fellowship which now extends into almost every nation, and binds citizens of them all together in true unity and mutual love. *No human agency has planned this.* It is the result of the great missionary enterprise of the last hundred and fifty years. Neither the missionaries nor those who sent them out were aiming at the creation of a world-wide fellowship interpenetrating the nations, bridging the gulfs between them, and supply-

ing the promise of a check to their rivalries. . . . Almost incidentally the great world fellowship has arisen from the enterprise. But it has arisen; it is the great new fact of our time! . . . Here is one great ground of hope for the coming days."

This great missionary enterprise was launched in prayer and the dynamic action resulting from prayer. Every great nation has made its contribution, and as a result every Christian in every nation has been bound together by prayer and the fellowship that develops intangibly when a great body of people are bent on a common undertaking. The belief in, and the spread of, Christianity when it is undergirded with prayer becomes an inevitable compulsion. During the terrible war years every earnest Christian met to pray with other Christians throughout the entire world for courage to hold loyally to their Lord and His teachings, no matter what the pressures to compromise with their cherished beliefs. One could not count the hours that the Christians of the world have spent on their knees imploring God for courage, for endurance, for faith, for victory, for each other. We have not prayed for safety and release so much as we have prayed for power.

Have our prayers been answered? Out of Norway comes Bishop Berggrav, out of Germany, Niemöller; out of France, Boergner; out of Italy, Pope Pius

XII; out of Japan, Kagawa; and out of Holland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, and China millions of big and little Christians who have been living and praying and resisting underground, and are now causing the Christian Church to burst into flame like a fire that has been secretly smoldering for a long time. Listen to this extraordinary account of the emergence of a militant Christianity in post-war Europe, written for *Life* magazine, September 23, 1946, by Paul Hutchinson, the managing editor of a great American church paper, *The Christian Century*:

“Western Europe is moving fast toward a showdown with Communism. Few Europeans doubt that any longer. They have only to read a single day’s proceedings of any international conference in which Mr. Molotov has figured. But what form will this showdown take? Will it be Stalinism versus a recovering capitalist conservatism? Will it be Moscow socialism versus old-line social-democratic parties? Or will the final antagonists be Russian-inspired Communist parties versus parties standing for an evolutionary socialism based on the principles of Christianity, anti-Communist parties inspired by the Christian churches, drawing their strength and leadership from Christian church members, and often proclaiming themselves ‘Christian’ in their very party names? . . .

"The Christians who have launched these parties see them as far more than a bid for offices. They believe that the European crisis is basically spiritual and that the political, social and economic future depends on what kind of faith triumphs. The Christian faith, they remind their recruits, rests on a view of the nature of the world and life which is fundamentally opposed to Communism and which must be preserved at all costs if Western civilization is not to lapse into slavery.

"Wherever these religious parties operate, the church denies that it has gone into politics. Technically this is true. The Pope did not command Catholics to vote the Christian Democratic ticket in Italy or the M.R.P. ticket in France. The Oberkirchenrat of the Evangelical Church in Germany has never directed the Protestants of Württemberg to vote a straight C.D.U. ballot. Nevertheless, all these parties will rise or fall in the degree to which Christian churchmen can be made to believe that they are acting as Christians by voting for them.

"What do these church parties stand for? They vary from country to country. In France the M.R.P. draws its basic ideas largely from Jacques Maritain, the Catholic philosopher (now French envoy at the Vatican), the French Dominicans, and the encyclicals of Pius XI. In Norway the Christian People's party is

colored by left-wing Lutheranism. In Belgium and Slovakia and in the Protestant parties in Holland they stand on the right. Yet, after admitting the differences, all have one common objective. They are anti-Communist. . . .

"In general, therefore, it can be said that the rise of the church parties in Western Europe signifies the political activation of the Christian socialist ideal. Does 'Christian-socialism' sound strange to American ears? We are conditioned to think that any political movement with a socialist label must be secularistic, materialistic, anti-religious and a threat to individual liberty. But Christian socialism is something else. It is just as intent on preserving individual liberty as it is on exploiting the whole resources of the community to insure social justice. Ideologically, it derives not from Karl Marx but from the prophets of Israel and the New Testament. It will grant the state enough control of her country's economic organization to provide every inhabitant with equal opportunity. But it will guarantee every inhabitant security in his person, his job, and his worship.

"What these church parties are seeking is social justice and human liberty. They propose to stop the advance of Communism across Europe not simply by fighting it, but by offering people something better."

The leaders of these Christian movements have

been molded in the crucible of oppression and persecution, and is it not possible that they have been sharpened to this keen cutting edge by the prayers of their fellow Christians around the world?

One does not like to state dogmatically that this powerful leadership taken by the Christian Church during the war years and now is the result of prayer, but as we look at the evidence—and I have only presented a very small segment of it—some agency seems powerfully at work energizing the world Christian community to marshal its forces to combat the disease germs of nihilism, atheistic materialism, and general chaos which are attacking the world with such vicious persistence.

If we undergird the leaders of our nations and the leaders of the United Nations with the same dynamic and believing prayer that I have been describing, it is possible that a peace can be built on a foundation of moral principle and spiritual power against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail. If this is to be accomplished, millions of us must give *priority* to prayer, for, as I have already said, in peace as in war, this is the first duty of every professing Christian in the eternal warfare between God and evil, of which our present crisis is but one small engagement.

“But what if evil should seem temporarily to triumph?” Millions of mothers prayed during World

War II that their boys would be returned to them safe and sound, only to receive their boys back disabled for life, or, worse, the grim message, "The War Department regrets to inform you . . ." Millions of desperate people in Europe prayed that their homes and countries might be spared destruction, only to have their homes reduced to rubble around their ears and their loved ones scattered like chaff before the wind. In many parts of the earth destitution, hunger, sickness, cold, insecurity seem to reign supreme. It would be presumptuous of me to attempt to answer the tremendous "why" that this sum total of human misery seems to write in letters of fire across the sky. Possibly it was for hours such as these that Jesus Christ, who was able to look through the veil of time, endured the cross, with all its suffering and darkness and apparent defeat. There are times when evil, which has always been at work in the world, seems more powerful than good—when it seems to threaten to destroy good altogether. There was a moment when even Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Countless millions must have echoed that cry during the past few years. But let us never forget Jesus' last words from the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It rings out triumphant and serene, like a glorious sunset after storm. It is the triumph of faith, the return of the sure

confidence that God has not abdicated. He is still in charge of His world, and still cares for those who trust Him. The final words of the Lord's Prayer, then, are true: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." How can they be otherwise? God proved them to us by giving us Easter and the Resurrection. God's answer to death is Life. His answer to suffering and personal disaster is Easter and Resurrection. When God is at the heart of our lives, and we have placed Him at the heart of Life, there is no calamity which is not at the same time an opportunity for Him to reveal His power.

When he was placed in the solitary confinement of a concentration camp, Bishop Berggrav turned his calamity into a spiritual triumph. The young woman dying of cancer could say, "Underneath are the everlasting arms and I know they will always be there." The lad facing a soldier's death could send a last message to his family: "God is holding us all in the hollow of His hand and we will be together wherever we are." Jim Young, the hopeless cripple, can say, "For God is able."

The sum total of our human miseries would add up to an exclamation point rather than a question mark, if we stopped thinking of death or disability or economic disaster as the final, terrifying enemies. If, instead, we could look at these things as an opportunity

for God to give His victory and power, they might lose their terror. Let us never forget that the Christian Church was established by men and women who did not fear poverty or pain, suffering or death. They were able to look beyond present defeat to ultimate victory, and the mighty promises in the 21st chapter of the Book of Revelation became their morning star.

Isn't that final glorious reward the thing we want most? "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son." So whether that reward comes to us in this world or the next, in living or in dying, it will come to us, we need have no fear.

VIII

PRAYER AND THE GOOD NEWS

To the first Christians "evangelism" was merely the sharing of the good news. In fact, "evangel" means good news. The good news of a new and marvelous friend—the man Jesus who had walked the roads of Galilee with them, helped them mend their nets by the lakeside, played with their children, healed their sick, even raised their dead, talked to them in familiar yet fascinating words about "the kingdom of God," where they and their friends would know no more sickness or oppression, sorrow or cruelty, war or famine, because they would have learned to live in such harmony and understanding, such inner peace and outward power that these things would not arise. God set the seal of truth on this man's words and acts by raising Him from the dead three days after His crucifixion. Joy, oh, joy—He must be the Messiah, for hundreds of them had seen Him after His resurrection. He was the long-promised Divine Companion. He had made everything different

for them. He had told them how much each of them mattered to the Father. He had told them that if they believed in Him, he would give them the power to do what He did, to speak as He spoke, to bring help to people as He had brought help to people—and, above all, He had promised to come to them Himself through the Holy Spirit, so that He might be with them all the time in this life and lead them lovingly into immortality. Hallelujah they cried to each other and streamed out onto the city street, the country roads, the great caravan routes, their faces aglow with the excitement of this revolutionary discovery.

Can't you see them—Peter, James, John, Luke, Martha, Mary, Nathanael, Lazarus, and all the others, visiting their friends, gathering at the village well, traveling the dusty roads from one town to another, talking in small groups on rooftops under the stars? "Have you heard about this man Jesus? What, you haven't heard about Him? Why, He's the greatest man that ever lived. I knew Him well." And then they are off to an increasingly spellbound audience—until someone cries out, "What must I do? I want what you're talking about. I want to know Jesus, too. I'll do anything to have what you say He gives, this peace of mind, this self-control, this sense that my life can really matter so much."

This is the way the Early Church grew, by the

whispering-campaign method, gossip in the market place, the grapevine across the housetops. The good news leaped like a flame from one man to another. It affected the people like a contagion. To them it was the most thrilling fact of history, and they could not wait to share it.

This year the emphasis of the Protestant Church is on evangelism. The good news has become familiar news, old news; the ecstasy of discovery has given place to the dutiful following of spiritual routines, worship services, church work, planning committees, prayer meetings, all good and important for nurturing and developing faith. But we modern Christians need the same tingling experiences of faith as these early Christians had. If we had met Jesus as these men had, the 75,000,000 non-churchgoers in the United States would soon dwindle to 75,000. The trouble with us is, we haven't caught the contagion. Many of us go to church every Sunday, we say our prayers; we are earnest, conscientious people, but we lack spiritual sparkle.

And yet we Americans are a very talkative people.

We make many important discoveries from day to day, and we can hardly wait to tell them to our friends. We have just read a new and wonderful book or tried a new and wonderful variety of vitamin pill, or bought a new and wonderful work-saving

gadget, or tried a new and wonderful weed-killer. These things we discuss freely. We may even have evolved a new and splendid theory for the solution of the world's economic crisis or the labor problem or the housing shortage—but perhaps the reason some of us become so self-conscious when the question of religion arises is that we have never met Jesus or come to know what He and His Father stand ready to do for us and our friends and the world around us. We are spiritually illiterate, or, if not that, so immature in our spiritual understanding that we become utterly tongue-tied when we attempt to express our faith. Others of us consider this relation of ours with God too sacred to discuss. "It would be like feeding caviar to cows," we say. Of course, it is true that our faith is like a beautiful jewel, which we want to show in the proper setting and to the best advantage, so as not to cheapen it and bring criticism on ourselves. But, like a beautiful jewel, it is utterly wasted if it is left to lie in the safe deposit box for fear that we might lose it or be criticized for wearing it. No, this is not the answer, nor is increased churchgoing or increased church work the answer. If we have met Jesus in the way and He has suddenly become a real and living personality to us, if we have come to love Him and trust His teaching, believed in His promises and tested His power, our whole lives become illuminated

as though a great searchlight had suddenly been trained on the dark, puzzling, confusing corners and everything had become clear and light and joyous. We must share this, for this is a supreme discovery, and we have so many friends who are floundering and need it—Mary and John, who are unhappy and drifting towards divorce; Aunt Kate, who is ill and lonely; Sally, in despair over a sixteen-year-old daughter; Jack, the young veteran so moody and restless and unpredictable that his mother and father are worried nearly to death over him; Eleanor, whose husband died suddenly last week; William, whose wife is neurotic. We have more than sympathy to give these people now—we have hope to share with them. What *He* has done for us He can do for them. We await our opportunity, and we go to them with our good news. Or we pray for them, and they come to us. This is evangelism.

One of our church leaders tells of returning from Europe, from where the strongest impression he carried away was that of hungry listeners everywhere. The pathetic eagerness with which great throngs would gather to hear a word of hope, of faith, of optimism made him, he said, feel as he had never felt it before, the desperate urgency of witnessing to our faith lest these hungry souls be engulfed by despair and hopelessness. As Russ Stevenson of the

American Mission in Alexandria says so cogently, "It is of the essence of Christianity that it must be passed on. Just to receive Jesus and never pass Him on to others is unthinkable. We are channels of the Water of Life, not pools."

Jesus went up into the mountain to pray and then immediately came into the world again to act. He taught, He transformed lives, He healed. He did not remain on the mountain reveling in companionship with His Father. He stayed long enough to worship His Father, yes, to thank Him, and, above all, so to open His heart and soul and mind to Him that the Father literally clothed Him with His own light and His own power. Then Jesus was ready to come down into the valley of men's heartaches and tragedies and miseries and to route these enemies of life. In her great book *The Healing Light*, Agnes Sanford says:

"In order to fill ourselves with His whole being, let us think of Him, imagining His presence, seeing Him with the eyes of the mind, trying to love Him with the heart. Let us beseech Him to come and dwell within us. Let us ask Him to enter into our spirit and fill us with His own consciousness of the power of God; to enter into our minds and think within us His own thoughts; to enter into our hearts and feel through us His own love, directing it to those who need it most. . . . Let us dwell upon Him and im-

merse ourselves in Him until the reality of His being fills us and floods us with power."

Here is the recipe for effective evangelism. Pray, talk, act. So many average people just like us are doing it all the time. America is full of them, our town is full of them, our church is probably full of them; but these people need allies. You and I can become a channel in such simple natural ways as are illustrated by the following stories.

Last summer a young writer came to our prayer group in great distress. Her mother, whom she dearly loved, was dying of cancer, and her faith was not strong enough to meet the test of this tragedy. We prayed with her and for her mother constantly. She found that she was able to overcome a lifelong shyness concerning things of the spirit and prayed with her mother creating a fellowship which meant everything to them both. Her mother's last days were free of pain and filled with a great peace. Then came the time of readjustment for the young woman, the tearing sense of separation and longing for the dear, close human companionship, and, at times, the gnawing feeling of grief and insecurity. Prayer brought her across this dark valley as well. All through this time she was working at a job that demanded more of her nervous energy than she had to give, and yet she had to keep going, for her bread and butter depended on

her job. Through prayer, a raise in salary and unexpected assistance came, and she was freed of the worry and strain that had kept her awake nights and tempted her into an old habit to release the tension. All this was such good news that she had to tell it to someone, so she told it to the wife of the minister in her home town. The minister's wife grasped at her experience like a drowning man grasps at a straw. She herself needed spiritual encouragement and an injection of fresh faith, and she needed it not only for herself but for the women in her parish, who, she felt, were going around in a dull, uninspired treadmill of church routines. Accordingly, she and the minister's wife, asked a few of the women in the congregation to meet with them for prayer, from which a whole new fellowship and spiritual vitality began to flow through these two women into that congregation and into that town.

You see how simply my friend became an evangelist. She prayed, and the answer was so satisfying that she was impelled first to talk and then to act.

Praying people are always ready to state the Christian point of view when a discussion arises. One of my dear friends, who believes deeply in prayer and also in giving an account of the faith that is in her, wrote me recently from a summer resort. "One night a group of us tried to combat a very materialistic

economist who was telling in several thousand ill-chosen words how to solve the world's ills. He thinks there are just too many Indians, Chinese, and other dark-complexioned people in the world. I was the only one who got a thrust in for the Christian point of view." On another occasion this same girl was at a dinner party with a group of close friends, all of whom were cradle Christians and very regular in their churchgoing. The conversation turned to the Jews, and immediately all the old misstatements began to fly around the table. "They were all dishonest, they were all swindlers; they were this, that, and the other thing."

"You people astound me," said my friend, finally. "Here you are churchgoers in good standing, yet you are slapping labels on people as though all of us so-called Christians had clean hands. How can you sit here and so blithely condemn a whole people? If there are no good Jews, how does it happen that our Lord was of the Jewish race and that all His disciples were Jews?" You see, my friend, as a strong Christian, was just not willing to sit still and allow a whole group of people to spend an evening indulging themselves in expressing prejudice and making misstatements, as happens unfortunately at all too many dinner parties these days. She wasn't belligerent or dogmatic, she simply and courageously stated her

understanding of what Christianity meant, and her comment turned the evening into a constructive discussion of what Christianity teaches about peoples and persons. This is real evangelism, this standing quietly for truth in the face of irresponsible talk. If there was someone at every dinner or tea, at every street corner, or market where opinions and prejudices are aired, it would have a profound effect in keeping the thinking and talking of Americans constructive and responsible.

Or take our casual contacts with people. To me one of the things that lend the most romance to life is the sometimes intriguing results of casual contacts. Chesterton tells us that the Franciscans saw to it that everyone who met them by chance should have a spiritual adventure. Of course, the story of Christ and the woman at the well, in the fourth chapter of St. John, is the classic example. I recommend that you read it as the perfect illustration of evangelism. Here Jesus Himself is the vivid and compelling personality. He was not preoccupied with the heat or His own hunger, as we would have been, but ready and alert to meet the woman and her need when she came to draw water. Recently a member of one of our parish prayer groups experienced a modern version of the well-side experience. Her adventure took place

on a train to Oklahoma. Following is a letter which was dated Sunday A.M., Chicago, en route:

"This brief Chicago stop-over gives me time to tell you of an interesting experience on the train.

"Two young college men sat across the aisle, so soon we were talking of New Yorker cartoons, John Gunther's newest book 'Inside U.S.A.,' P.M. editorials, the prom at which John Powers selected the prettiest girls, their war experiences in the Pacific—in short, subjects as varied, normal and interesting as their normal, substantial and exuberant personalities.

"One was an economics major, the other a philosophy major. They were comparing instructors and both expressed great admiration for Dr. Green and his ideas on philosophy of Christianity. I started to quote Dr. X on a point and at mention of his name they nearly hit the baggage rack. 'You mean Bill X,!' I was really in from then on because they both had heard him speak at their college the last time he was there, and were deeply impressed. Questions zinged at me right and left. They wanted to know *how* 'Bill' ticked and why. It lead into an exposition of the policy of making clergymen and laymen with mutual benefit; of ignoring denominational differences, thereby increasing understanding of the basic similarities and thus decreasing the differences; of the value of personal interviews; of the fellowship which

replaces individual weaknesses with group-built strength; of the incontestable truth that religious motivation brings out individual useful traits; that one has spiritual responsibility.

"I have a conviction that I may never see them again and will probably have very little personal influence on the situation, but the Lord is using me as a liaison officer to keep those boys in touch with someone who may be used more significantly.

"It was a delightful visit. Train rides are always fun.

"It is almost time to board the train for the second lap of this trip. It is exciting to wonder if something equally nice will happen in the next twenty-four hours."

If every Christian in America were alert to this kind of opportunity just think of the spiritual adventures we would have.

One of the great concerns of the churches is the falling away of the young people. Church staffs and church committees spend hours discussing and planning what can be done to hold the young people, as well as attract teen-age or college-age youth into the church. A Christian college president and his wife have solved the problem in what I believe is the ideal fashion. These people are devoted praying Christians and when they became the head of a small college

which was pretty badly demoralized and completely lacked any spiritual emphasis, they decided that something must be done about it. President X observed very wisely that the four years the average young person spends in college constitutes a cutting loose from the moorings of any churchgoing habits which might have been developed earlier. The college and college projects and interests become their whole life. They are reluctant to take part in any activities outside of the college. "This being the case," said the college president to himself, "we will bring the church inside and the students will run it themselves." A college church was organized of which the students became the governing body. I shall let the college president's wife describe the results, as it is one of the finest examples of functional evangelism of which I've ever heard:

"The boys wished a corporate worship on the campus and suggested that in the first year or two there be some requirement for attendance. This was adopted temporarily and later dropped when it became entirely voluntary. There had been many protests against the fact that there were no religious exercises, and finally the College Church was adopted.

"The College Church services began in an old abandoned church near the campus. The attendance was excellent. One of the conspicuous features was a row

of football players who made it a practice to come, and the effect of the church services and the religious influence soon became evident in a squad which had been somewhat disorderly and demoralized. Gradually, one by one, students requested an opportunity to join the church on confession of faith. A number were baptized and accepted into the church for the first time. A great Something began to happen on that campus.

"I began to hear of Tony, a fine athlete and football player, who was a Roman Catholic. He had been dropped with a number of football players who were not meeting the academic requirements of the College and had come back without a scholarship and was earning his way through college. He was a loyal member of the Catholic church but was deeply impressed and deeply affected by his experience in the College Church. He went back to his priest and asked whether he might have a letter transferring his membership from his home Catholic church to the College Church. The priest said this wouldn't be possible. Tony asked the priest whether he was going to deny a personal conversion no matter where it happened. The priest said he didn't think he would and gave a letter to Tony authorizing him to join the College Church. This student became one of the greatest influences in the College for good and for Christianity.

"The second boy of whom we spoke was most unpleasant and surly. He was Rumanian by birth, a member of the Greek Catholic Church, a member of the football team on an athletic scholarship, the last of such scholarships to be used in that college. He had been sent to college by the members of a leading group of gangsters in a prominent American city for the purpose of preparing for law school. Their hope was that he would, as a lawyer, not participate in their activities, but serve them as an attorney, after he had completed his education. He was tall, handsome, athletic, a potential leader. He came regularly to the new church and there came a change in his thinking and in his attitude. Finally he, too, contrite and penitent, asked to be baptized. From then on he became a positive influence on the campus. He decided to go into the ministry. He was graduated finally from the theological seminary, married, has a family, and has served in three different churches.

"This is going to be entirely too lengthy; but I pass on to you just these two examples of the power of Christ as it was at work there on that campus. I think I told you that there has never been anything in my experience with students in America or abroad that has equalled the Communion Service as the church developed. We would usually have a hundred or more people there on Sunday mornings, with

everything in the church student-led except the preaching. Our processional and recessional robed choir never ceased to make the chills run up and down my spine, and the serving of Communion by our ordained youth elders, sitting in a great row across the front of the church, was truly, I believe, one of the most impressive experiences of its kind I have ever had."

According to the college president, the inspiration and regular responsibility that the young people discovered in the College Church are developing them into responsible churchgoers; all join churches on the return to their home towns, and carry on in the spirit of their College Church experience.

My last story is particularly for churchgoers who are concerned because the church is losing or not increasing its membership. Every responsible churchman or churchwoman should be able to do what the Sunday-school superintendent in this story was able to do. If you are not able to do it your faith may be faulty and you had better re-examine it, and then try to recapture the quality of faith and concern for others illustrated by this story—"so that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus." This is the story:

"Charles and Buddy came in the Community Church Center office with eyes beaming. 'Can Jim

join the club? He's new, just moved here.' Jim joined the club and proved a real asset. He had personality plus and qualities of leadership rarely found in a little boy of nine. We were sure he had parents who cared about his growth and development, but we wondered why we never saw the parents in church. We soon found out. Both parents had had Christian home training but after establishing their own home they had neglected their churchgoing. There were so many things to do on Sundays. We interested Jim and his younger brother Bob in the activities of the Center and they finally joined the Junior and primary departments of the Church School.

"One day the boys' mother called to express her appreciation for our interest and to say that her doctor had informed her she was to be the mother of twins. During her pregnancy we tried to be good neighbors, but neither of the parents showed any interest in the church or its activities. Then the twins arrived, a girl nearly five pounds and a boy barely three. There was the happy return from the hospital, but suddenly complications developed with the mother and she was hurried back to the hospital in the night. The grandmother was left in the home with the tiny babies in a strange city. Fortunately, she had contact with the church through the boys. She had been a woman of prayer and again felt the need of Divine

Power. She called me and we had prayer during the night, while the physicians worked. It was decided that an emergency operation must be performed, but only a slim chance remained for recovery. As they wheeled the new mother to the operating room and sent out the word, 'Very little chance that she can survive,' three people prayed in faith, believing that the work of that new mother was not finished but that those tiny little ones needed her and that God would spare her to finish her work. We prayed earnestly that supernatural strength be given the mother so that she might live. We prayed that the surgeon might be given supernatural skill and wisdom; we prayed that the hand of the Almighty be recognized and thanks and praise be given Him for a miracle. The mother came from the operating room 'just breathing—can't tell the outcome.' The little group continued to pray in faith and with assurance in their hearts. Twelve hours later came the reassuring word, 'It's a miracle; she has a good chance for recovery. We don't understand—she was so near death!' You can imagine our jubilation over this good news. God had heard us and answered.

"The mother came home shortly afterwards and is now doing all the homework and caring for the babies and the other two boys. But the important thing is that the grandmother, the husband, and the mother

realized the miracle, and they have not ceased to be grateful to God, not only for the life of the mother and the babies but for His love and care for them all. The father and mother decided to come again into the church, and are active members. All four children have been baptized and the family of six attend morning worship regularly and are constantly telling others what God has done for them."

If each of the 75,000,000 churchmen brought one person into church we would reduce the non-churchgoing population to nothing. This seems not to be an impossible task for God to set us. We have a lifetime in which to accomplish it. So let us take heart from the example of our friends, the newspaper editor, the shop girl, the young churchwoman, the traveler, the college president and his wife, and the church-school superintendent. There is enough potential power available to the churchgoing population in America to bring the whole world to Christ's way if only we would avail ourselves of that power and worship, pray, act, and talk so that *the evangel* sweeps the earth. Surely we will not remain so indifferent to that power or so unaware of its potency that we come in fear, or waste our energies in impotent rage while a dynamic materialistic ideology, spawned in atheism and spread by the most unscrupulous means, reaches out to the millions of despairing, hopeless, or merely

ignorant and leaderless people of the world with its insidious promises and poisonous doctrines. Christians, take heed! If we believe in Christ, if we believe in His way, we must become the Peters and Jameses and Johns of this generation. We must give thanks and realize again that we have at our disposal a power greater than atomic bombs or ideological threats. We have all the power of God expressed so magnificently in the closing words of the Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." So let us have done with timid bleatings and half-hearted suggestions, and proclaim the good news from the housetops, for it is the *only* way to save the world from self-destruction.

IX

THE KEY TO LIFE

We have been tracing in this little book how individuals and in a small group men and women can build a road to God through prayer—a road which will carry them into His presence and which will carry Him into theirs, a road paved with thanksgiving, meditation, petition, intercession, and listening, a road which like the house built on a rock, described so trenchantly by Jesus in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, will withstand all the winds and rains of life, a road for the building of which God Himself has supplied the materials.

The final requirement for our road, the ultimate assurance that it will carry us into the presence of our Father, is a companion to walk it with us. Jesus offered Himself to us as this Companion on the night before His death, for without His constant presence and encouragement He knew that we would never have the perseverance to continue when the road seemed long or was swept by darkness and storm.

In Jesus' day a great deal more importance was attached to eating together than is attached to it now. Sholem Asch, in his magnificent book, *The Apostle*, gives us a vivid description of the sacrament of the common meal. Eating together was not merely a means of satisfying hunger; it was much more than that. It was also symbolic of human and spiritual fellowship. So that for Jesus to choose this very simple and necessary daily act and to turn it into a symbol of the abiding companionship between Him and those who love Him was a singularly beautiful and typical thing for Him to do.

Long before the Last Supper Jesus began to symbolize Himself to His disciples as their food and drink. He meant to be their spiritual means of life, as bread and water and wine were to be their physical means of life. In the sixth chapter of St. John we hear Jesus saying the following wonderful words:

"I am that bread of life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is

drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him; *so he that eateth me shall live by me.*"

Jesus sealed these astounding claims for Himself with an act. If the disciples forgot everything else He had taught them He wanted to make sure they would not forget this, the heart and soul of all His teaching. So on His last night on earth He sat down to supper with them in an upper room, and as they were eating, "Jesus took bread and blessed it and brake it and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body; and he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."

In the broken bread and the poured-out wine Jesus symbolized the necessity of sacrificing His physical life so that we might have His spiritual life. It could come no other way. Jesus knew He had to die, had to be broken, had to pour out His blood in order to live in us. Just as we cannot eat bread unless it has first been broken, and as we cannot drink wine unless the grapes have first been trodden out in the wine-press, He was willing to be broken like bread and poured out like wine because He cared so supremely that we should have this spiritual life. That is why He could say so poignantly on that last precious eve-

ning, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." His physical life, the ordinary man's most precious possession, Jesus sacrificed gladly, so that we might have in its place that pearl of great price, His complete spiritual presence—"He that eateth me shall live by me."

Jehus asked His disciples to depeate the symbolism of His Last Supper so that they and generations to come after them would never forget what He meant by it and never be without His power and companionship. The haunting words, "Do this in remembrance of me," have repeated themselves down the centuries, in Roman catacombs, in millions of churches, on thousands of battlefields. They and the sacrament they represent have carried His living presence. His mighty power, untarnished, undimmed, like a many-faceted diamond, straight into our hearts today. The celebration of the Last Supper has become the greatest universal sacrament of the Christian Church. Different denominations interpret it differently. Some believe that as we meet at the altar in His memory and in His honor it inspires us to reconsecrate ourselves to Him and the building of the Kingdom; others believe that His living spirit meets us there; still others, that He, himself, body, soul, and spirit, is there in all His fulness.

We can thank God that all of these interpretations

indicate such a universal and profound faith in the special efficacy and power of the Holy Communion that it has become for most Christians the place above all others where the supernatural Christ meets the natural man and transforms him.

The wonder of the sacrament of Holy Communion is that it satisfies the heart-hunger of each individual who partakes of it, and, according to the capacity of each, Christ fills him or her with all of His fulness. As one person expresses it, "When I go to the Holy Communion, I feel as though Jesus were standing there, saying, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him.'"

It all becomes so simple. Whether He is there in spirit or in person, when I eat the bread and drink the wine I exchange my fear for His courage, my weakness for His strength, my blindness for His insight, my doubt for His sureness, my impurity for His purity, my confusion for His clarity, my plan for His plan, my will for His will, myself for Him. He renews His companionship with me on the road.

I do not analyze all these qualities every time I take Communion—I merely know that I go empty and hungry and come away filled. I go restless and come away at peace. I go defeated and come away victorious. I do not believe that I shall meet only Him,

I both meet Him and receive Him. I believe that He will meet all of us there in similar fashion.

But, you may say, what relation has the Holy Communion to prayer? Every Communion service is preceded by every element of prayer, prayer for cleansing and inspiration, our declaration of faith, intercession for the Church, confession, praise, invocation, oblation, leading us to the sublime climax, the supreme form of prayer, consecration and sacrifice and acceptance. Because Christ so loved us that He sacrificed His body and blood for us, we are impelled by the power of this love to make the return sacrifice. Further, He accepts us as we accept Him. The emotion in our hearts has been caught up into immortal words in the Anglican Prayer Book: "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee, humbly beseeching thee, that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him."

At this point we are welded into one personality. He is brought into our hearts as we have already been taken into His. The mutual self-giving is sealed as we eat the bread and drink the wine, and we go out

to our daily tasks no longer alone but filled with His inexhaustible presence.

So, as we build our road of prayer and start to walk out on it, we become more and more dependent on the Divine Companion who is walking it with us. The sunlight is brighter, because He is there; the darkness does not frighten us so much, because He is there, and we are not apt to miss the way, because He is there. We do not quail at the sharp turns and narrow ledges, because He walks on the outside, until we begin to realize all the glory of His last great promise to us, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."